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FUTURE
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***Above:** The flooded, muddy terrain around Ypres made the Allies' task even more daunting*

CONTRIBUTORS

MAREK SOBIERALSKI

On page 40 Marek presents a selection of translated letters from German soldiers serving on the Eastern Front in 1942. These letters, intercepted by the Polish Home Army, provide a valuable, and chilling, insight into the German experience on the frontline during this critical year.

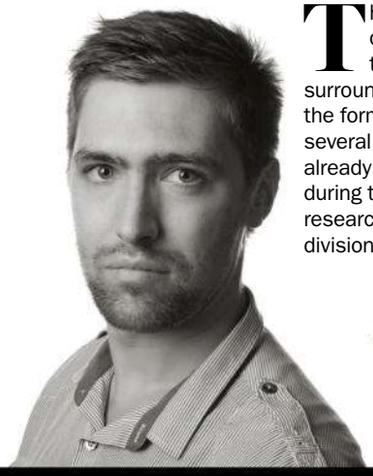
MICHAEL HASKEW

In this issue's Operator's Handbook, Mike takes a look at the Ka-52 attack helicopter. This unique Soviet design, known as the 'Alligator', is capable of flying without a tail rotor, as proven most recently in video evidence from the Ukrainian frontline (page 64).

ALEX BOWERS

Alex is back, this time taking a look at a Canadian hero of the Victoria Cross: Frederick Tilston. This officer put his body on the line, and received multiple injuries, during a perilous assault against enemy positions during Operation Blockbuster, in March 1945 (page 56).

Welcome



The Third Battle of Ypres in 1917 was a long and gruelling offensive, characterised by almost impossibly muddy conditions that slowed the allies' progress. The objective was to seize the heights surrounding the city of Ypres, while also taking logistical rail hubs. Among the formations thrown into the fray during over 100 days of combat were several Australian divisions – including many men and officers who had already experienced radically different but no less gruelling conditions during the Gallipoli campaign. Inside this issue, Craig Tibbitts, senior researcher at Australian War Memorial, recounts how the men of these divisions, far from home, made the ultimate sacrifice at Passchendaele.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

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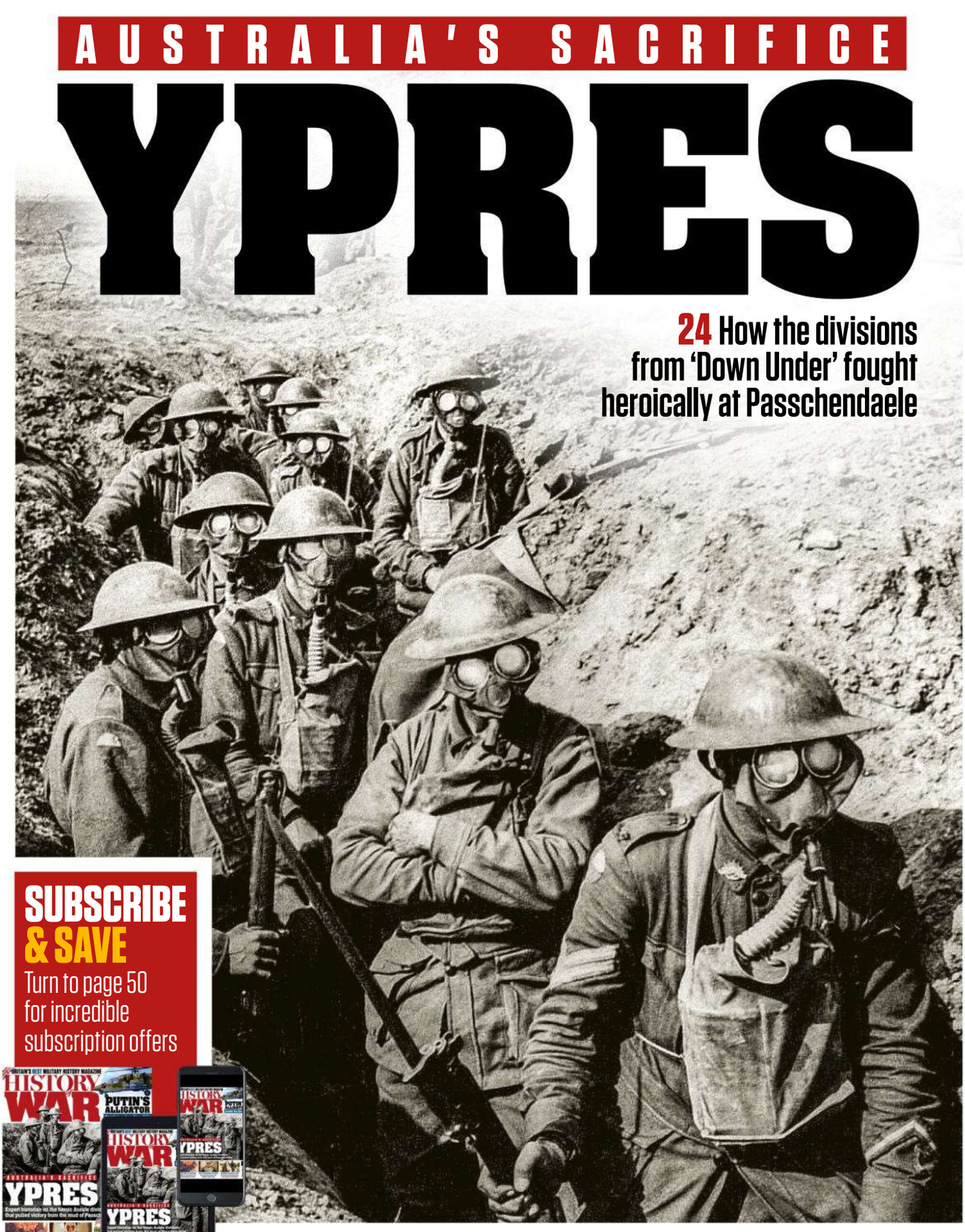

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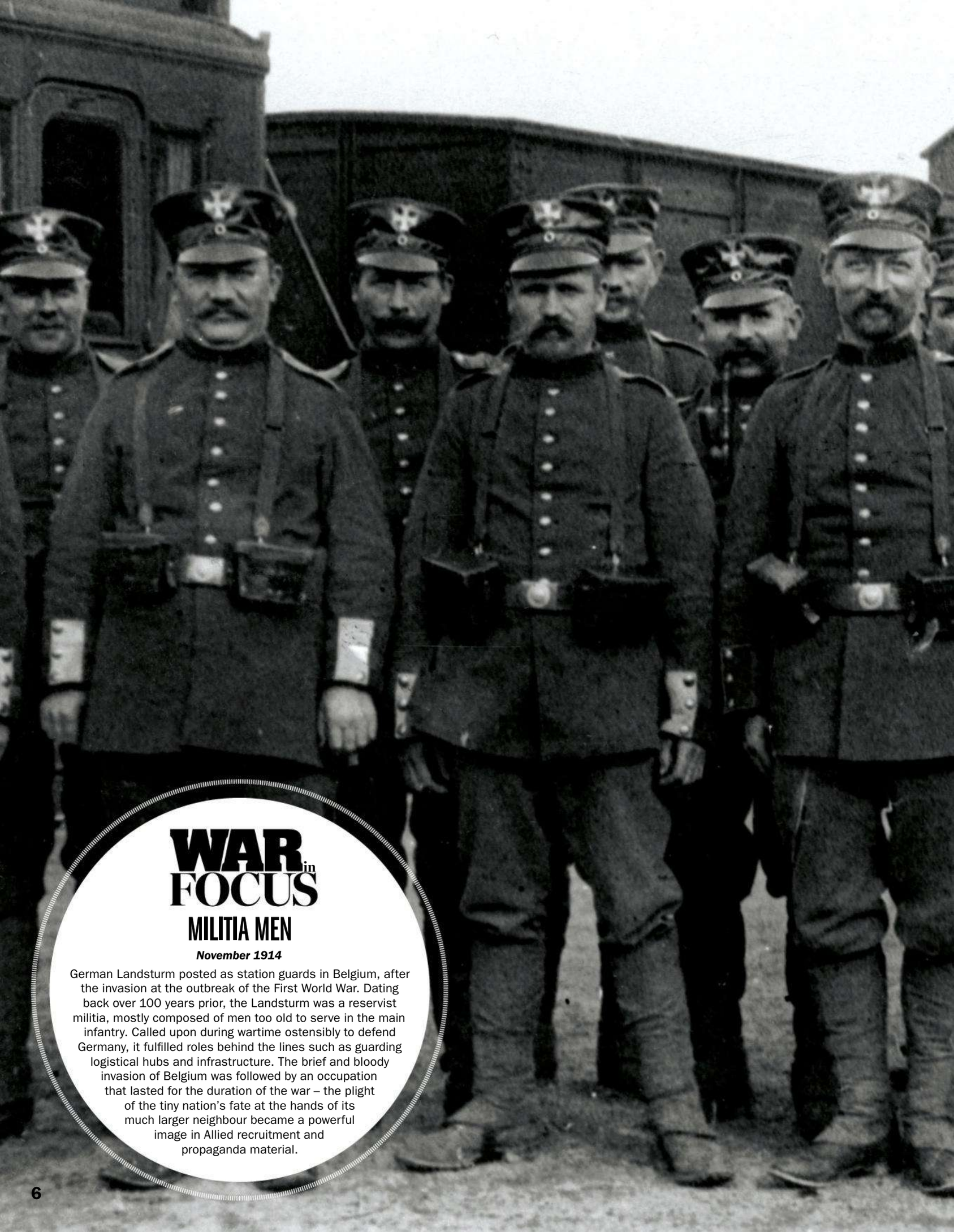


WAR in FOCUS

MILITIA MEN

November 1914

German Landsturm posted as station guards in Belgium, after the invasion at the outbreak of the First World War. Dating back over 100 years prior, the Landsturm was a reservist militia, mostly composed of men too old to serve in the main infantry. Called upon during wartime ostensibly to defend Germany, it fulfilled roles behind the lines such as guarding logistical hubs and infrastructure. The brief and bloody invasion of Belgium was followed by an occupation that lasted for the duration of the war – the plight of the tiny nation's fate at the hands of its much larger neighbour became a powerful image in Allied recruitment and propaganda material.

© Alamy

WAR in FOCUS

A BITTER HARVEST

June 1991

A turret belonging to a destroyed Yugoslav People's Army tank lies on farmland after a battle. As evidenced most recently in the war in Ukraine, Soviet era tanks have incredibly vulnerable ammunition storage, resulting in catastrophic detonation in the event of a direct hit – in many cases blowing the turret clean off the hull. In 1991, both Croatia and Slovenia fought separate wars for independence during the break-up of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav People's Army, federal armed forces, attempted unsuccessfully to suppress these breakaway states, resulting in a long and violent period in the region's history.

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

TAKING AIM

December 1942

Red Army soldiers armed with PPSh-41 submachine guns defend their position in the outskirts of Stalingrad during the battle for the city. The submachine guns were fitted with drum magazines, increasing the weapon's ammunition but also its weight. These guns were among the most common in the Red Army during the Second World War, with a high rate of fire (approximately 900 rounds per minute) that made them highly effective in urban environments. The PPSh-41's simple design made it incredibly hard-wearing and practical; it was easy to disassemble and clean, while broken parts could be easily removed and replaced.

© Getty

TIMELINE OF THE...

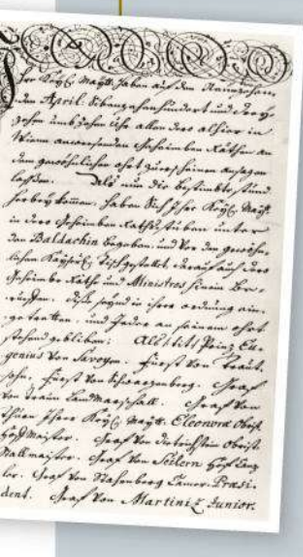
WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION

Sprawling empires, rising nations and powerful dynasties clash in a bid for control over Europe's future

BATTLE OF MOLLWITZ 03

Without bothering to declare war, Prussia invades Silesia, eager to add territory. The new Prussian monarch, Frederick II, takes the first steps towards building his formidable reputation with a narrow victory over the Austrians at Mollwitz, the first major battle of the war.

19 April 1713 — **13 May 1717** — **20 October 1740** — **10 April 1741**



THE PRAGMATIC SANCTION 01

The document that is the spark for a war: Charles VI, ruler of the Habsburg monarchy and Holy Roman Emperor, declares that any female offspring he produces will be eligible to succeed him, superseding the claims of his nieces, the daughters of the previous emperor, Joseph I.

The first page of the sanction that is to lead to eight years of war

BIRTH OF MARIA THERESA 02

Until Charles has children, the Pragmatic Sanction is purely academic, but that changes with the birth of Archduke Leopold Johann. Tragically, Leopold dies before the age of one and it is Charles' second child, Maria Theresa, who stands in line for the Habsburg throne.

Maria Theresa, painted by Andreas Møller

DEATH OF THE EMPEROR

The death of Charles VI prompts the formation of two rival camps, one of which supports Maria Theresa's claim to the throne and one of which opposes it, preferring other candidates. The major European powers choose sides and war quickly breaks out.

Charles VI, as painted by Jacob van Schuppen

The Silesian aristocracy pays homage to their new overlord, Frederick II, in a painting by Wilhelm Camphausen

TREATY OF BERLIN

With other nations joining the war, Prussia makes its exit, Frederick II being content with the massive gains in territory and population made in Silesia. The Treaty of Berlin sees him strike a separate peace with the Austrians and bow out of the fighting for the next three years.

July 1742

1 February 1742

THE CONVENTION OF TURIN 04

Sardinia and Austria agree to work together to resist Spanish incursions into Italy, and a period of inconclusive military manoeuvring and diplomatic intrigue opens. The Italian theatre will remain active for the entirety of the war.

Charles Emmanuel III, Duke of Savoy and King of Sardinia, fought against the Spanish for the duration of hostilities

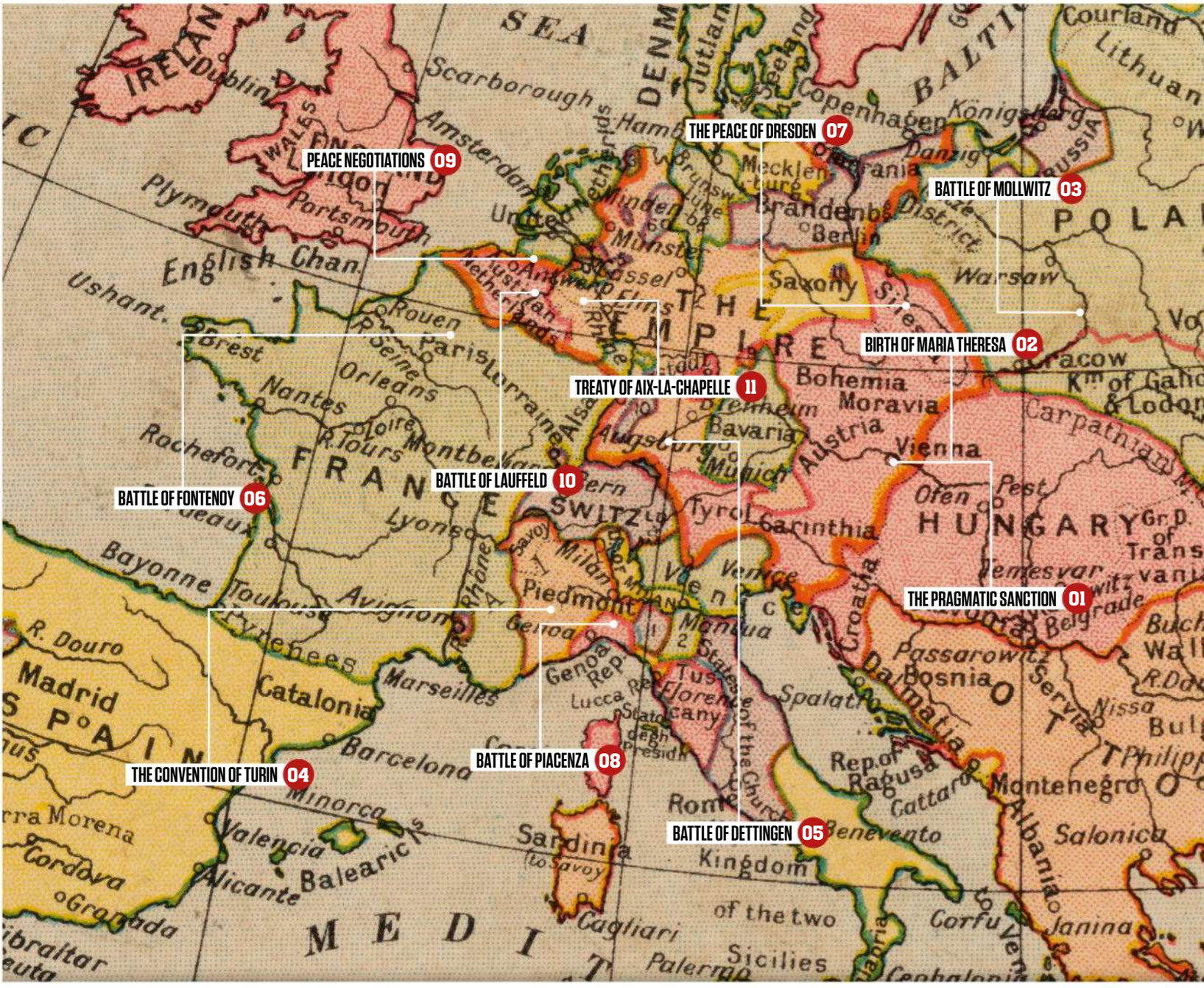
27 June 1743

BATTLE OF DETTINGEN 05

The last battle in which a British monarch leads an army in the field, George II narrowly avoids a catastrophic defeat when a well-laid French trap goes awry. The capture of the monarch may well have knocked Britain out of the war.

King George II at Dettingen. A fierce half-hour exchange of musketry decided the battle in favour of the Pragmatic Army

Images © Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art



11 May 1745

BATTLE OF FONTENOY 06

As part of their campaign in the Austrian Netherlands, a French army under the brilliant Marshal Saxe defeats a combined Dutch-German-English army at Fontenoy. Britain then becomes preoccupied with the Jacobite rebellion back home, allowing the French to make more progress.

French troops present captured British colours to Louis XV

28 June 1745

General William Pepperrell rides triumphantly among his troops after the surrender of Louisbourg

CAPTURE OF LOUISBOURG

In North America, a combined force of Royal Navy ships and colonial militia captures the strategically important French stronghold of Louisbourg, on the island of Cape Breton. The position is handed back to the French at the end of the war.

25 December 1745

THE PEACE OF DRESDEN 07

Having rejoined the war and won a string of victories, including the Battle of Kesselsdorf (15 December 1745), which allows Dresden to fall into Prussian hands, Frederick II once more makes peace with Austria and withdraws from the war.

Frederick the Great is depicted as a wild-eyed madman in Wilhelm Camphausen's portrait from 1870

TREATY OF AIX-LA-CHAPELLE 11

The war comes to an official end with the adoption of nine terms, most important of which are the acceptance of the Pragmatic Sanction, the retention of Silesia by the Prussians, the return of the Austrian Netherlands to Austria and the exchange of Louisbourg and Madras.

Not many of the war's participants see the peace treaty in such noble terms as artist Jacques Dumont le Romain

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS 09

Already sick of the war, Britain and France open peace negotiations, but the Duke of Newcastle instructs Britain's representative at the talks, Lord Sandwich, to drag his feet in the hope that the Pragmatic Allies might secure a major victory and so improve their bargaining position.

As the senior secretary of state, Newcastle was convinced that strong ties with Austria were the key to Britain frustrating the French

Like Louisbourg, Madras is handed back to its former owners after the war

FALL OF MADRAS

French forces begin their assault on Madras on 7 September 1746, with a naval bombardment and the landing of troops. In just two days the British garrison surrenders, largely because the fortress is weak and ill-equipped to stand up to a prolonged bombardment.

16 June 1746 — June 1746 — September 1746 — 2 July 1747 — October/November 1748

BATTLE OF PIACENZA 08

An Austrian army wins victory over its French-Spanish enemies at Piacenza in the last major battle in the Italian theatre. The situation in Italy remains finely poised, but the Bourbon powers have to accept that their plans to overrun northern Italy have failed.

Joseph Wenzel I, Prince of Liechtenstein, commands Austrian forces at Piacenza despite suffering from ill-health at the time

BATTLE OF LAUFFELD 10

As the war grinds towards a standstill, Saxe inflicts another serious defeat on a British-led Pragmatic Army in the Austrian Netherlands. Despite having considerably fewer men than his opponent, Lord Cumberland, Saxe wins his third major victory of the war.

Victory at Lauffeld opens the door for the French to take Bergen op Zoom (pictured) and Maastricht

Images © Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

THE RISE OF PRUSSIA

Frederick II took his first steps towards becoming 'The Great' during his campaign in Silesia

The conflict that broke out over the succession of Austria's imperial throne has been intimidating historians for more than 270 years. With a kaleidoscope of changing combatants, political intrigue and shifting aims, not to mention the vast scope of the war, which saw hostilities in almost every corner of the world, it is an almost impossibly unwieldy entity.

Adding to the confusion is the overlapping with other wars, often between the same protagonists – the two phases of the war involving Prussia are often referred to as the First and Second Silesian Wars, and elsewhere there was King George's War and the War of Jenkins' Ear.

Fittingly, for such a fiendishly complex war, the origins were themselves deeply complicated. In the late 18th century, tension began rising over the successor to Charles VI, ruler of the Habsburg monarchy and Holy Roman Emperor. Two opposing sides emerged from this dispute, although the members of each camp often changed. On one side, the Pragmatic Alliance believed that Charles VI's daughter, Maria Theresa, should step into her father's shoes. On the

In what was arguably the most decisive victory of the entire war, a combined Austrian-Saxon force was routed by the Prussians at Kesselsdorf

other, Prussia and France put forward their own candidates.

The earliest, bloodiest and also the most consequential fighting of the war involved Prussia. Led by its new monarch, Frederick II, the relatively new nation was at the time in a vulnerable state, comprising three loosely connected parcels of territory, open to attack from multiple directions. Although Frederick's father, Frederick William I, had built up the Prussian military to a strength of 80,000, he had refused to wield it offensively.

Frederick had no such qualms, but recognised that the limited economic strength of his nation would necessitate the fighting of short, decisive wars. If he became bogged down in prolonged campaigning, his country would soon become bankrupt.

Once the dispute surrounding Charles VI's successor came to a head with his death in October 1740, Frederick's first act was not in support of one candidate or another – it was simply a land-grab. On 16 December, just two weeks after Maria Theresa ascended to the throne, Frederick made his move, invading the Austrian territory of Silesia.

Most of Silesia was in Prussian hands within six weeks, but the Austrians launched a major counteroffensive the following year. At the Battle of Mollwitz (10 April 1741), Frederick appeared to be in serious trouble as Austrian cavalry gained the upper hand over their Prussian enemies, but his infantry held to secure victory. An era of Prussian military prowess was dawning and, more importantly in the context of this war, their victory encouraged other powers to form an alliance against Maria Theresa. Bavaria, Saxony, the Italian state of Savoy-Piedmont (Sardinia), Spain and France all declared themselves opposed to the new queen.

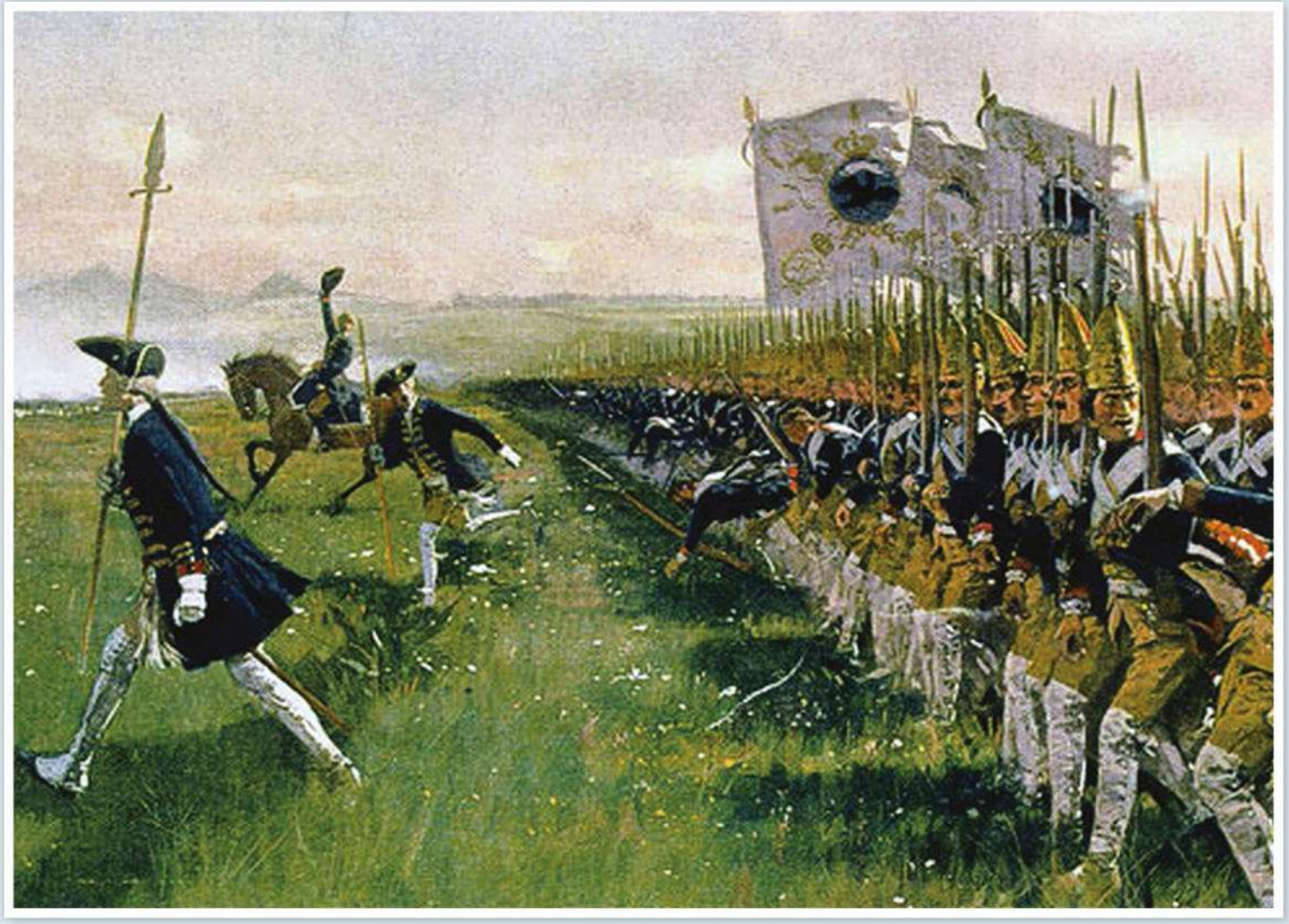
"WITH THE FRENCH FAILING TO STICK TO THEIR PLAN, THE OUTNUMBERED ALLIES TURNED THE TABLES AND SECURED AN IMPORTANT VICTORY"

Frederick, meanwhile, reckoned he had achieved enough for now. With Europe erupting into open warfare, and enemies lining up against the Austrians, he believed his gains in Silesia were safe and promptly dropped out of the alliance he had done so much to create by signing the Treaty of Berlin in July 1742.

Even with the Prussians out of the picture, things looked bleak for the Austrians and for Maria Theresa, but they were receiving financial support from Great Britain, Austria's traditional ally. With the increasing influence of France and Spain on the war, Britain took the step of committing troops, making an important contribution at the Battle of Dettingen (27 June 1743). A complex French trap almost succeeded in destroying an outnumbered Pragmatic Army (a mixture of British, Hanoverian and Austrian troops commanded by King George II). With the French failing to stick to their plan, the outnumbered allies turned the tables and secured an important victory – in spite of, rather than because of the king's leadership, it must be said.

The following year, Britain and France formally entered the war, and with Austrian fortunes improving, Frederick saw the need to jump back into the conflict to protect his gains in Silesia. Taking the offensive once more, this time in Bohemia, he achieved mixed results, but started to build his reputation at the Battles of Hohenfriedberg (4 June 1745) and Soor (29 September 1745). These were the battles where Frederick unleashed his innovative and (for a time at least) effective 'oblique approach', a battlefield tactic that enabled him to overwhelm one flank of his enemy's army, while pinning the other.

Prussia's greatest success, though, came under a different commander, Leopold of



***Below:** The disciplined ranks of Prussian infantry march forward to the attack at the Battle of Hohenfriedberg*

Images: Getty, Alamy

The Battle of Kesselsdorf saw an Austrian-Saxon defeat despite having more troops and superior positioning

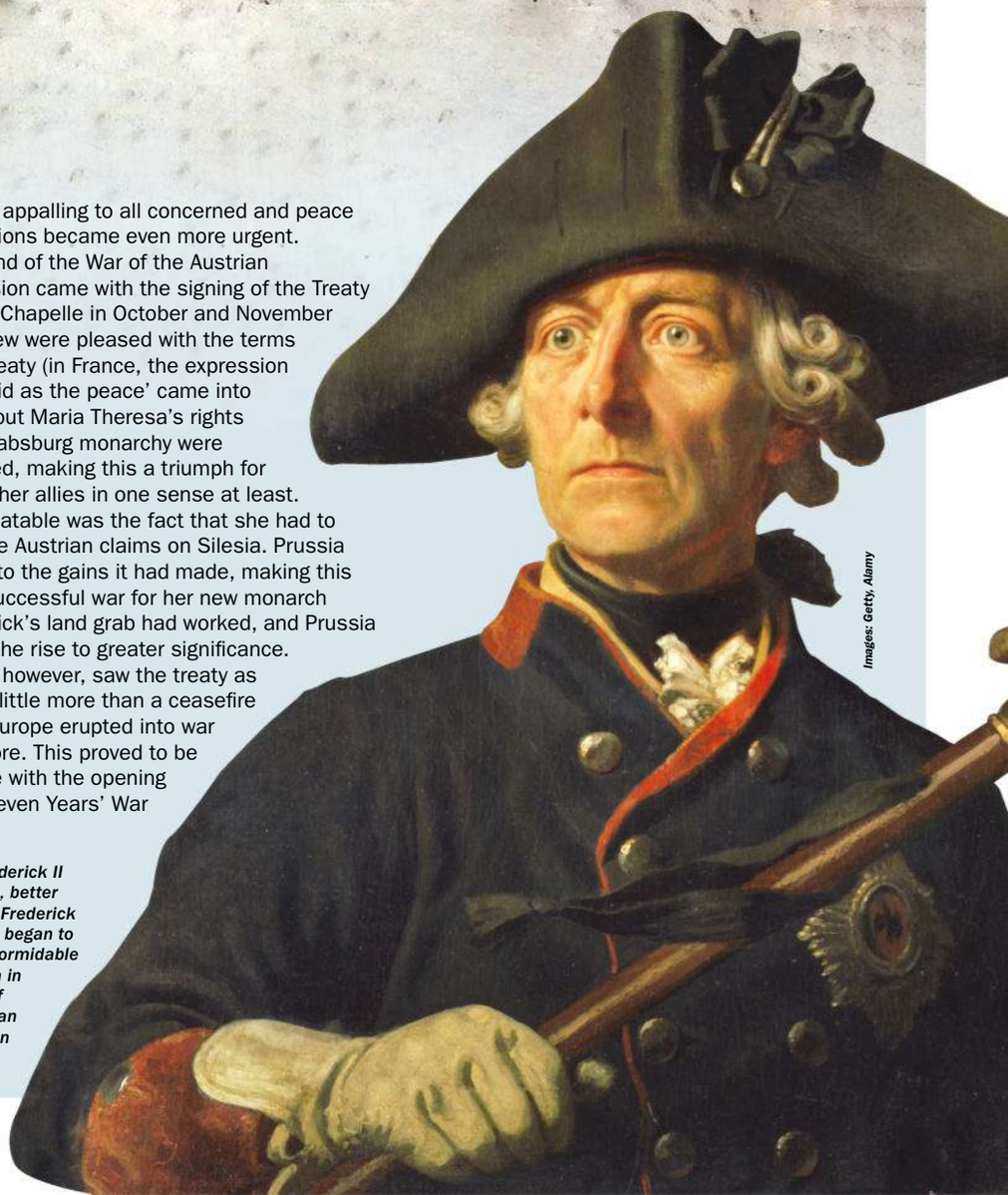
Anhalt-Dessau, at Kesselsdorf (15 December 1745). Dessau overcame a slight imbalance in numbers (35,000 to 32,000) and also the superior positioning of the combined Austrian-Saxon force opposing him. An initial Saxon success, repulsing two Prussian assaults, led to an undisciplined advance, which was countered and routed by Prussian cavalry. The Saxons understandably pulled back, but then abandoned their strong defensive positions and refused to stand and fight the next day, leaving Dresden to fall into the hands of the Prussians. As a result, Austria immediately began negotiations to end hostilities with Prussia and the Peace of Dresden was signed on Christmas Day 1745. Frederick had once more achieved much in a short, sharp campaign, and was happy to withdraw from the war for the second (and final) time.

The focus of the war then shifted to the Low Countries and the Italian peninsula, with occasional flare-ups overseas, but all parties were eager to disengage now, as there seemed little left worth fighting for and the war was ruinously expensive. Britain and France, in fact, began peace talks in June 1746 but it was to be more than two years before the conflict was finally concluded.

An ominous late development saw the arrival of 37,000 Russian soldiers in the Rhineland, in February 1748, following a convention between Britain and Russia. The prospect of fresh fuel being poured onto the dying embers of the war was appalling to all concerned and peace negotiations became even more urgent.

The end of the War of the Austrian Succession came with the signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in October and November 1748. Few were pleased with the terms of the treaty (in France, the expression 'as stupid as the peace' came into vogue), but Maria Theresa's rights to the Habsburg monarchy were confirmed, making this a triumph for her and her allies in one sense at least. Less palatable was the fact that she had to renounce Austrian claims on Silesia. Prussia held on to the gains it had made, making this a very successful war for her new monarch – Frederick's land grab had worked, and Prussia was on the rise to greater significance.

Most, however, saw the treaty as offering little more than a ceasefire before Europe erupted into war once more. This proved to be the case with the opening of the Seven Years' War in 1756.



***Right:** Frederick II of Prussia, better known as Frederick the Great, began to build his formidable reputation in the War of the Austrian Succession*

Images: Getty, Alamy

THE COLONIAL WAR

Fighting was not confined to Europe, as hostilities raged through the colonial possessions of Britain, France and Spain

Britain needed little encouragement to fight its French and Spanish opponents overseas. In fact, Britain was already at war with Spain in the colourfully named War of Jenkins' Ear, which had been bubbling since 1739. Sporadic outbursts of violence took place on the high seas, in North America, in India and the West Indies, giving the War of the Austrian Succession a truly global scope.

In the West Indies, an assault on the Spanish stronghold of Cartagena was badly botched by the British. In the fever-ridden Caribbean, emphasis was always placed on speed of action, but the attacking British force wasted time until disease devastated it, throwing away a ten-to-one advantage in manpower as well as naval superiority.

Small-scale operations, often undertaken by privateers, characterised the fighting in the region for the remainder of the war, although a tiny force of 300 British managed to take Saint Martin.

In North America, a combined operation featuring Royal Navy ships and colonial militia captured the French fortress at Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island, in 1745. The fortifications, designed by perhaps the most famous military engineer of all time, Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, had 30ft (9m) stone walls and 100 cannon and was dubbed the 'Gibraltar of the West', but the British deemed it vulnerable from the landward side. A combined force of 4,500 men, 34 guns and four Royal Navy warships began the operation on 10 May 1745, and with the help of 24 captured French cannon, the ensuing siege featured heavy bombardment from land and sea. On 28 June the fortress surrendered.

"IN THE FEVER-RIDDEN CARIBBEAN, EMPHASIS WAS ALWAYS PLACED ON SPEED"

On the other side of the world, the French countered the fall of Louisbourg by taking Madras, again after a short siege in September 1746. The rather neat symmetry of the operations would be reflected in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle, when the two possessions were simply handed back to their original owners, much to the disgust of the colonists in North America.

France was in position to deal an even greater blow to the British position in India by taking Fort St David, but a disagreement between the local commanders snatched the chance away.

Britain enjoyed more success when the newly formed Western Squadron, patrolling off the French coast, intercepted a combined convoy heading for both India and North America, with Pondicherry and Louisbourg the ultimate goals. With Admiral George Anson in command, the British demolished the French, capturing 18 ships with a total prize value of £300,000. The practice of blockading French ports would go on to serve Britain well in future conflicts with France.

Admiral Anson's ships in action off Cape Finisterre, by Samuel Scott

Images: Wiki / PD / Art

BATTLE FOR THE LOW COUNTRIES

French Marshal Maurice de Saxe earned a formidable battlefield reputation during the second phase of the war

Operations had already opened in the Low Countries when the Austrians and Prussians ended hostilities for the second time. The French had made inroads into the Austrian Netherlands in 1744, and the next year Marshal Maurice de Saxe persuaded his political masters that a renewed assault on the Low Countries would be the best way of straining British resources. Worries over a potential rebellion in Scotland meant that Britain had one eye on the situation at home and one on the continent, and Saxe took advantage, launching an offensive against the most important of the so-called Dutch 'barrier forts', Tournai.

The move drew out the British and forced them to face Saxe with a Dutch-German-English army commanded by the Duke of Cumberland – the two armies met at the Battle of Fontenoy (11 May 1745). They were more or less equal in size, but their commanders were in stark contrast. Saxe had already demonstrated an eye for strategy and now proved his worth as a battlefield tactician, outclassing Cumberland.

Critically, Saxe had a realistic assessment of his infantry's capabilities – he did not rate them highly and therefore put them in a strong defensive position and invited the Pragmatic Army to attack. Obliging his opponent, Cumberland failed to secure solid intelligence on enemy numbers, and believed that the main French line comprised the vast bulk of their army. He therefore ignored strong French positions on their flanks and instead launched a powerful attack on the centre.

Superior leadership saw the French emerge victorious at the Battle of Fontenoy, May 1745

Legend has it that British Guards, occupying the front rank of the advancing troops, invited their French counterparts to fire the first volley. Whether or not this is true, the French did fire first, and the British were then able to advance and deliver a far more devastating volley of their own. Even though Cumberland's infantry broke the French and then held firm against a cavalry counterattack, Saxe was able to use the men from his flanks to wrap around Cumberland's ranks, employing field artillery to force the Allies to withdraw. French losses were steep, at around 6,000 of the 50,000 who took part in the battle, but Cumberland's losses were twice that, making this a humiliating defeat for George II's third son.

Following the Allied retreat, the French were able to take Tournai and then benefitted from the temporary withdrawal of Britain from the war – the feared revolt in Scotland had manifested itself in the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Not part of the War of the Austrian Succession, it still played a role, giving the French a much easier road through the Low Countries.

This was fortuitous, because the French state was creaking under the demands of the prolonged war. With the British out of the fight, Saxe was able to tear through the Austrian Netherlands, capturing Ghent, Oudenarde, Bruges and Dendermonde, but it was the capture of the ports of Ostend and Nieuwpoort that were most concerning to Britain, threatening to cut it off from the continent.

Maurice de Saxe started his military career with the army of the Holy Roman Empire

By the time Britain returned full attention to the continent, having put down the Jacobites, France was assaulting forts on the border between the Austrian and Dutch Netherlands. Ironically, Britain and France were by now engaged in peace negotiations, neither wanting to sustain their costly war efforts any longer than was absolutely necessary. While talks plodded on, a huge battle was fought at Rocoux (11 October 1746), where Saxe again emerged victorious. A significant numerical advantage (most estimates are that his army was around 120,000, while his Austrian-British-Dutch-German opponents numbered around 75,000) inevitably played into his success, but Saxe proved he was capable in attack as well as in defence, taking the imitative and concentrating his assault on the left of the Allied line to overwhelming effect.

He once more inflicted twice as many losses (8,000 to 10,000) as he sustained (3,000 to 4,000). Only an orderly retreat, and Saxe's decision that it was too late to pursue his defeated enemy, prevented this defeat from being decisive, but it still opened the way for the French capture of Liege.

Britain was eager to regain some of this lost territory before peace negotiations wrapped up, and Cumberland moved clumsily on Antwerp. Despite this time facing a clear numerical disadvantage (80,000 men compared to 120,000 under Cumberland) Saxe added to his growing reputation by flinging back the British advance and then handing them another defat at the Battle of Lauffeld (2 July 1747). This latest failure by Cumberland led to the capture of Bergen op Zoom and then Maastricht, which fell shortly before the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed.

Saxe could feel personally aggrieved by the terms of the treaty, which handed back the gains he had made through a series of glittering victories. France agreed to withdraw from the Austrian Netherlands, and all his efforts had been for nought.

Images: Getty / Wiki / PD / Art

THE WAR IN ITALY

Political manoeuvrings were at least as important as military operations during a tumultuous period on the peninsula

Italy was to provide a complex subplot to campaigning in other regions. Though hostilities stretched out over the entire course of the war, it was a strangely subdued theatre. Many of the Italian states had no interest whatsoever in the argument over who should take over the Habsburg throne, and most (including Venice and Tuscany) remained neutral. The pope made it clear he wasn't taking sides either.

Fighting in Italy was therefore rather detached from (and undertaken for different purposes than) the fighting in Germany and the Low Countries. One of the principal goals, in fact, was the securing of an Italian principality for the younger child of the Spanish queen, Elizabeth Farnese. Don Philip, it was thought, would look good on the throne of Parma.

The two Italian states that did get involved chose different sides. Charles Emmanuel of Savoy-Piedmont (Sardinia) and Charles VII of Naples each had their reasons for taking up arms: Charles VII, the elder son of Elizabeth Farnese, was bluntly ordered into the war by his parents, while Charles Emmanuel (having initially been on the Bourbon side of the argument) formed a hasty alliance with the Austrians when he became alarmed by the numbers of Spanish troops moving into the Italian peninsula.

The first phase of the war was inconclusive and the vast majority of losses on both sides were due to desertion and disease – a combined Spanish-Neapolitan force in central Italy, initially 37,000-strong, was whittled away to 25,000 without a shot being fired. Modena made a tentative foray into the war, supplying 5,000 men to boost this dwindling army, but an Austrian-Sardinian force quickly knocked Modena out of the war. With this first Spanish army stymied, a second was organised to enter Italy through French territory. Commanded by Don Philip himself, this made little progress at first but switched its focus from Piedmont to Savoy, suddenly making quick progress and forcing the duchy's capitulation.

This set off a chain of events that saw the initiative shift. First, Charles Emmanuel

Genoese troops in action at the Battle of Bassignano

abandoned his operations with the Austrians to rush back to protect Piedmont. This gave the Spanish-Neapolitan army the upper hand, but in August 1742 a British naval squadron arrived to threaten Naples with bombardment, forcing Charles VII to abandon his operations with the Spanish. The mad rush of forces left the situation in central Italy neatly balanced, and neither side attempted anything for the rest of the year.

A change of general in the Spanish force in central Italy changed the situation in early 1743. Jean Thierry du Mont, Count Gages, had been given an ultimatum from Madrid – advance or resign. He chose the former and initiated the first major battle of the Italian theatre, losing a confused encounter at the Battle of Campo Santo (8 February 1743).

The following year, the Austrian-Sardinian alliance looked to take the offensive, moving an army of 25,000 men towards the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Under the uninspired leadership of Johann Georg Christian, Prince of Lobkowitz, the army became bogged down in the indulgent pleasures of Rome and found themselves confronted by a Spanish-Neapolitan army. At the Battle of Velletri (16–17 June 1744), the Austrians were surprised and routed in a small-scale action, which opened the door to a potentially much more important event. Learning that King Charles VII was at Velletri, Lobkowitz launched an audacious kidnap mission, which almost succeeded and would have crippled the Neapolitan forces. The ruse appeared about to work, before Austrian troops decided it would be more fun to loot the town rather than capture the king. As they descended into drunken debauchery, Charles VII escaped, half-dressed, on horseback. Subsequent fighting between the two forces (the Second Battle of Velletri, 11 August 1744) was inconclusive, but although Neapolitan losses were more than twice those of the Austrians, the escape of the king made this a victory.

"THE ARRIVAL OF A LARGE NUMBER OF AUSTRIAN TROOPS NO LONGER NEEDED TO FEND OFF THE PRUSSIANS REVERSED SPANISH FORTUNES"

To the north, a French-Spanish army started to make progress against Piedmont, but came upon a rock in the form of the five-sided fortification of Cuneo. A siege was opened, but stubborn resistance (including a major battle at Madonna Dell'Olmo on 30 September 1744), plus bad weather, forced the Bourbon allies to withdraw.

In December, the Spanish found the going much easier in central Italy, marching unopposed to take Milan. Don Philip declared himself king of Lombardy and appeared satisfied. If a peace settlement could be reached now, then the Spanish would have achieved their major war aim in Italy.

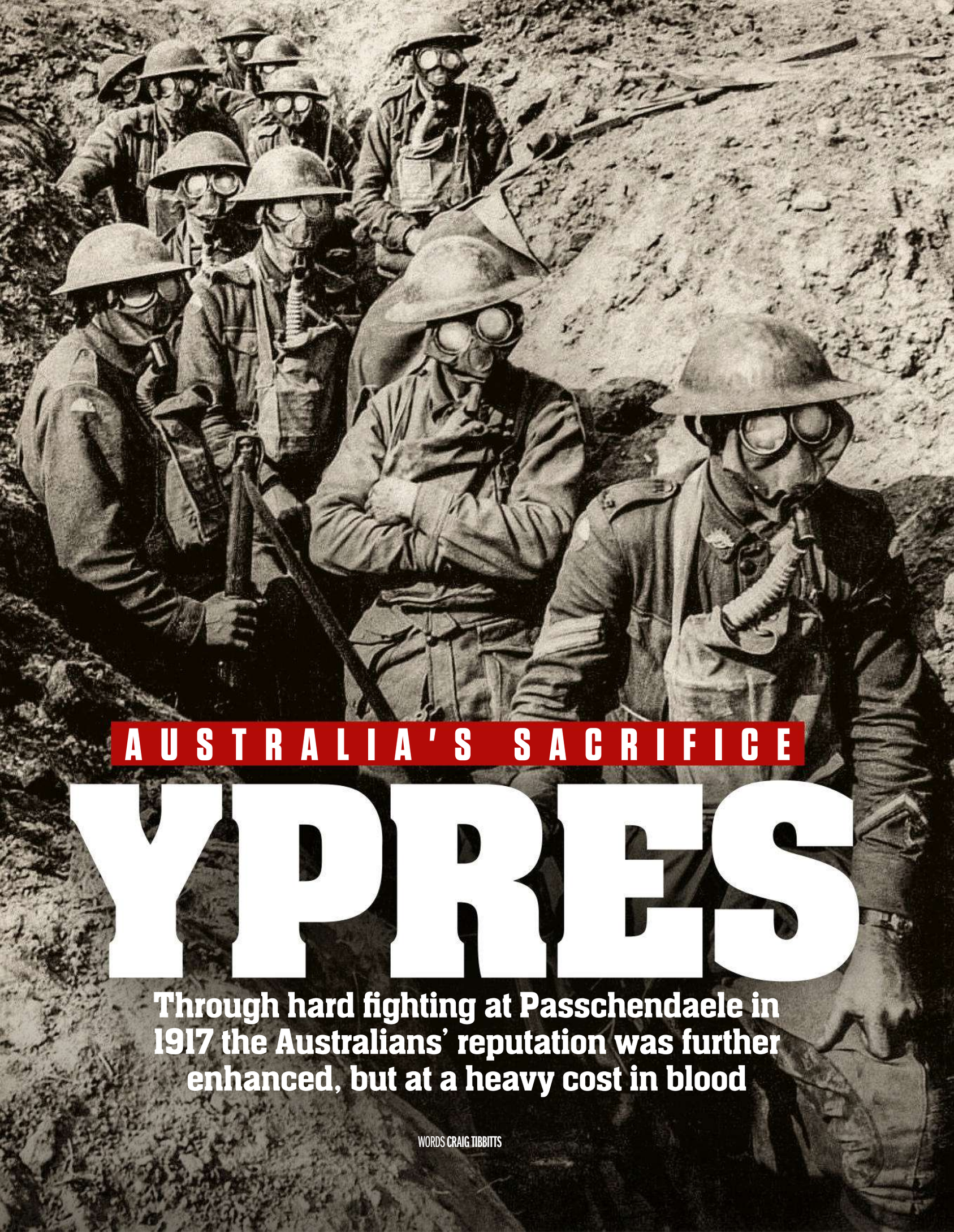
The intervention of Genoa then helped the Bourbon allies secure a victory at Bassignano (27 September 1745), but peace between Austria and Prussia upset the balance. Diplomatic intrigue, and the arrival of a large number of Austrian troops no longer needed to fend off the Prussians, reversed Spanish fortunes in Italy and Don Philip was soon on the retreat again. A decisive victory for the Austrians and Sardinians at Piacenza (16 June 1746) was the last major military action as all sides descended into exhaustion. The stalemate was broken by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and most important from the Italian perspective was the handing over of the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla to Spain.

Don Philip had his Italian kingdom after all.

Images: Wiki / PD / Art

***Left:** A kingdom for the foppish son of Queen Elizabeth Farnese, Don Philip, was one of the main Spanish aims of the war in Italy*

Images: Getty



AUSTRALIA'S SACRIFICE

YPRES

Through hard fighting at Passchendaele in 1917 the Australians' reputation was further enhanced, but at a heavy cost in blood

WORDS CRAIG TIBBITTS

After a hard day's training near Bailleul, about nine miles (15km) southwest of Ypres in Belgian Flanders, Major Frederick Tubb VC sat down as usual to write in his diary. It was 12 September 1917.

"Tomorrow we are off on our journey to the line to carry out the real thing… We have a stiff job to perform and the 7th has the most difficult job to do. My [company] has the place of honour on the right… With the very best love all my dear folk I'll conclude this. I have a very busy time ahead. FH Tubb."

Tubb had joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in August 1914, a second lieutenant in the 7th Infantry Battalion. A year later at Lone Pine, Gallipoli, Tubb, with just two surviving comrades, was holding a vital trench fending off furious Turkish attacks. Badly wounded, the trio held on until support finally arrived. For their bravery all three were awarded the Victoria Cross, one posthumously. Tubb took nearly 18 months to recover and though he could have sat out the rest of the war, this born leader and fighting man was determined to rejoin his unit and see things through. Back with the 7th Battalion by the end of 1916, 35-year-old Tubb took command of a company as the Australians endured the terrible winter on the Somme, then fierce fighting at Bullecourt on the Hindenburg Line during May 1917. Their next ordeal would be the great offensive in Flanders – the Third Battle of Ypres.

Background to the campaign

Third Ypres, otherwise known as the Battle of Passchendaele, was the major offensive effort of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the Western Front during the latter half of 1917. With allied forces on other fronts incapable of sustaining any similar large-scale offensive action at the time, it fell to the BEF to keep the pressure on the Germans. The planned offensive also had important strategic objectives: to force the Germans back from the Passchendaele Ridge, which maintained a stranglehold on the town of Ypres, and to clear the Germans from the Belgian coast. The latter would also ease the U-boat threat by capturing their bases.

Troops, arms and supplies were moved to the Flanders front after stalemate had set in to the south, where allied progress was halted by the immense strength of the Hindenburg Line. In early June a major operation preliminary to the offensive at Ypres took place just to the south, centred on Messines. Here, the British Second Army, including II ANZAC (2nd Australian and New Zealand Army Corps), led by Lieutenant General Sir Alexander Godley, took their objectives after a week of bitter fighting. This secured the southern flank for the attack at Ypres.

After a two-week bombardment the Ypres offensive, led by Fifth Army, was launched on 31 July. Initial progress was good, with the lower ridges captured and important locations gained. But soon the rains came and continued throughout most of August. The high water table coupled with drainage systems destroyed by shelling meant the battlefield turned into a quagmire. Further progress stalled.

Field Marshal Douglas Haig then passed command from General Hubert Gough to General Herbert Plumer. Gough's Fifth Army would still participate but planning and lead attacks would be with Plumer's Second Army, which now moved its boundary further north. Plumer was known for his detailed planning and methodical approach. Instead of more ambitious objectives, 'step-by-step' tactics supported by much more artillery would be the way forward. Attacks would have limited objectives of no more than 1,500 yards deep (1,370m), followed by consolidation to repel counterattacks with massive artillery support. A pause would follow

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***Left:** Men from the 45th Australian Battalion wearing small box respirators at Ypres*

***Below:** The successful attack at Polygon Wood, September 1917, came at a cost of 5,770 Australian casualties*

during which more men, guns and supplies were brought up for the next step. This was true war of attrition tactics intended to grind the Germans down and take advantage of allied artillery superiority.

Menin Road

While the Australian artillery had been involved since the offensive began, the infantry made their first appearance on 20 September in what became known as the Battle of Menin Road. In taking the lead, Plumer had insisted on three main things: more men, more artillery and a period of drier weather. He got all three, with I ANZAC (1st Australian and New Zealand Army Corps), commanded by Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, joining his Second Army for the renewed push. At that stage I ANZAC comprised the 1st, 2nd and 5th Australian Divisions, while II ANZAC had the 3rd and 4th Australian and the New Zealand Division. As part of the BEF they were organised, trained and functioned just like any other formation. Both corps were by now experienced and their seasoned troops had gained a reputation as very dependable both on the attack and in defence. While part of the BEF, the Australians had also developed a high opinion of themselves, believing they were superior to German and British troops. In part bravado, in part a sense of unique national identity, such feelings fuelled a strong bond of comradeship and keen morale.

After a five-day artillery preparation the attack was launched in the early morning of 20 September. The 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions advanced in the centre of an eight-mile (13km) front alongside nine British divisions. Through the shattered remains of Glencorse Wood, Nonne Boschen and Westhoek, the Australians followed a strong creeping barrage, taking out pillboxes and strong points along the way until they reached their objectives and began digging in. Gunner Ronald Hall wrote in his diary:

"Our infantry gained all their objectives… and prisoners have been coming down. SOS about 2.30pm but Fritz got knocked back. Another… about 5pm and again at 6.30pm Fritz knocked back each time."

Hall was referring to 'SOS' bombardments that his infantry comrades had called for to fend off multiple German counterattacks. At that time German defensive doctrine had been to hold the front line lightly, based around strong points such as concrete pillboxes, and send in well coordinated, powerful counterattacking forces to retake the lost ground. But this took time, so when they came, the British and Australians were ready for them.

All had gone very well in the Australian sector and generally across the front. But while successful, advantage still lay

***Below:** This colourised stereoscopic card shows British troops in action at Polygon Wood*

***Above:** Allied soldiers throw grenades at a German machine gun position during the Third Battle of Ypres*

***Left:** British troops at Menin Road, October 1917. It was the main route leading east out of Ypres*

with the defenders, who could maintain cover instead of advancing in the open. Tubb was wounded by a sniper as he led his company of the 7th Battalion forward that morning. Just to the north in the 2nd Australian Division's sector, 21-year-old Lieutenant William Seabrook from Sydney was leading his platoon across duckboard tracks when a shell struck, wiping out an entire section. Seabrook was stretchered away badly wounded. Not long after, another shell killed his two elder brothers, George and Theo, outright. William died of wounds the next day. There would be hard news coming for the Seabrook family.

The Menin Road attack had been successful, with all objectives captured and held. But as with most First World War battles, it was still very costly. The attacking forces suffered 21,000 casualties, including 5,000 Australians.

Polygon Wood

The next 'step' in the offensive was to capture Polygon Wood and advance the line another 1,500 yards (1,370m). This time the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions were in the centre of a nine-division attack on a five-mile (8km) front. Things nearly went badly wrong when the day before the allied attack, the Germans made a strong counterattack themselves. This drove back the British troops on the 5th Australian Division's flank, leaving it open and vulnerable. The remainder of the 25th was spent trying to rectify the situation; troops of the Australian 15th Brigade scrambled to help regain some ground before their own attack began. They barely made it and suffered heavier casualties because of this additional hard fighting.

When the attack opened at dawn on 26 September, if anything the supporting barrage was even more intense as divisions advanced on a slightly narrower front and even more guns had been brought up. Australian official war correspondent and later historian, Charles Bean, wrote

"THE AUSTRALIANS FOLLOWED A STRONG CREEPING BARRAGE, TAKING OUT PILLBOXES AND STRONG POINTS ALONG THE WAY"

A BITTER PILL

Taking on and defeating pillboxes was no easy task for infantry, and often was achieved with great loss of life

A distinctive feature on the Passchendaele battlefield in 1917 was concrete pillboxes. Three main factors led to their use. First, the high water table and rainfall made trenches less practicable, so robust fortifications on the surface were needed. Second, increasing British artillery superiority meant these constructions could offer German defenders shelter during bombardments and a strong post to fight off infantry attacks. Third, pillboxes also suited revised German defensive tactics of defence in depth using mutually supporting strong points.

Made of steel-reinforced concrete with walls and roofs several feet thick, they were able to withstand even direct hits from all but the heaviest-calibre shells. Low and squat, they were built in many different sizes, some designed to accommodate only six to eight men, ranging up to larger ones with up to 20 to 40 occupants. Often, debris was stacked on top and against the walls to break up the silhouette. Rear-facing walls were thinner so if captured, the enemy would not have the protection they assumed.

The Germans built three main lines of defence to a depth of several miles anchored on the ridges rising gradually to Passchendaele. Hundreds of pillboxes and shelters were scattered throughout the area making it an exceptionally strong defensive system. Well to the rear waited the German counterattack troops and massed artillery in support.

Being largely impervious to artillery, each pillbox had to be taken out by the attacking infantry. With the Germans determined to hold and fight from these strong points, they inevitably became the scenes of many bitter struggles. Moving in small groups following a creeping barrage, the attacking troops would work their way forward, increasing pressure on the defenders. Small parties would try to outflank the pillboxes, clearing their supporting machine gun posts with bombs and bayonet. Lewis gunners would spray the pillbox embrasures to try and suppress their fire, while Mills bombs and smoke bombs added to the confusion. Some daring individuals might make it right up to the pillbox itself and try to shove bombs through the embrasures. Once surrounded, the occupants often surrendered but these could be tricky moments. If confusion led to belated firing from within, sometimes vengeful attackers with their blood up took harsh retribution, showing little mercy.

***Left:** Bunkers were made of reinforced concrete and could withstand hits from all but the heaviest-calibre shells*

***Below:** Scott Post bunker – named after the commander of the 56th Australian Battalion that captured it*

that the barrage creeping ahead of the infantry raised an immense wall of dust and smoke, and with a deafening roar "it rolled ahead of the troops like a Gippsland bushfire". Out of the ground came the Australian infantry – many lighting pipes or cigarettes – as they followed the barrage.

On the 14th Brigade front the 53rd Battalion easily captured the first objective, the Red Line, which included all of Polygon Wood and the important Butte feature (a prominent earthen mound), at its eastern end. Through them came the 55th and 56th Battalions to take the second objective (Blue Line), which lay upon the major German defensive line, Flandern I. The men quickly overran the German defenders, who were stunned by the intensity of the barrage. Sharp fighting took place around concrete pillboxes but soon all objectives had been captured. That afternoon, strong German counterattacking forces were spotted moving forward, but once again the artillery tore them to pieces before they could get close. The next few days saw this repeated.

The 56th Battalion suffered 255 casualties, the losses especially heavy among the unit's key officers. While moving up for the attack, artillery had killed the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) Captain George Elliott, while a sniper had shot B Company's commander Captain Raymond Single through the head before they jumped off. Later in the day C Company lost their leader, Captain Hubert Thompson. The final cruel blow was the death of the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Humphrey Scott DSO, shot by a German sniper just as he was handing over to a relieving British unit. Once again, the Polygon Wood attack had been successful on a broad front, but at the cost of another 15,000 British casualties, including 5,770 Australians.

Broodseinde

The next phase, the battle to capture Broodseinde Ridge, would see I and II ANZAC fight side-by-side for the first time in the war. On 4 October the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Australian and the New Zealand Division attacked at the centre of a 12-division front covering some eight miles (13km). But there were two important changes at this time: German defensive tactics and the weather. The two previous battles had demonstrated that the Germans could not stop the BEF pushing forward. They therefore reverted to holding the forward line in greater strength and instead of launching counterattacks with specialised troops held well to the rear, went back to launching faster, local counterattacks. By coincidence this saw both sides attacking at almost the same time on the morning of 4 October. A bad case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, the German attack was simply swept away. When the allied barrage descended and the troops went forward, it was a repeat performance. Objectives were captured to a depth of 1,000 yards (900m), and this time no powerful counterattack would materialise.

The 37th Battalion's CO described the scene:

"Everywhere bore unmistakable evidence to the fact that a deadly battle had recently been made. Shovels, picks, broken duckboards, tools of every description lay scattered about in large quantities… Putrefied masses of German dead lying in fantastic heaps tarnished the atmosphere beyond pleasantness. Pillboxes still remained although their exteriors were somewhat damaged by our own heavy shells. Working parties were busy, generally preparing for the new onslaught to be made. Officers… saw vividly what was before them and were not deterred by the gruesomeness of the picture which had been painted for them."

"IN HINDSIGHT THE OFFENSIVE SHOULD HAVE BEEN HALTED THEN BUT HAIG, AS EVER, WAS DETERMINED TO PRESS ON, ALWAYS SURE THE ENEMY WAS ABOUT TO CRACK"

Broodseinde cost another 20,000 British casualties including 6,432 Australians and 1,643 New Zealanders. While successful, the three step-by-step battles had so far cost some 55,000 Allied casualties, including 17,000 Australians.

To make matters worse, the rain had returned that very day, 4 October, and persisted throughout much of the month and into the next. With it came the mud, which would soon see the battlefield totally inundated once more. In hindsight the offensive should have been halted then but Haig, as ever, was determined to press on, always sure the enemy was about to crack. The landing on the coast was abandoned and all focus put on the capture of Passchendaele Ridge – of much less strategic value if that was all they were going to achieve as it could be covered and dominated by enemy guns.

Allied troops and German prisoners at the Menin Road, October 1917

***Above:** Lieutenant John Maher Lyons was a Sydney tram conductor before the war. A Gallipoli veteran, he had also served in the capture of German New Guinea in 1914*

***Above:** Captain Charles Morrice Williams was also a grazier and station overseer in the Australian outback before the war*

***Above:** Frederick Harold Tubb was a grazier from Longwood, a tiny hamlet in rural Victoria before the war. His brothers, Alfred, Arthur and Frank also served in the AIF*

Passchendaele

On 9 October two British divisions, the 49th and 66th, led the attack in the Battle of Poelcappelle. On a narrowing front in increasingly muddy conditions, losses totalled nearly 7,000. The 2nd Australian Division operating on their flank lost 1,253. Captain Charles Williams of the 24th Battalion, a Gallipoli veteran, had been lightly wounded at the Battle of Menin Road. He returned to lead his company at Broodseinde, then again on 9 October. They reached Daisy Wood where fierce enemy resistance was encountered from enemy strong posts. Williams led his men forward but just as they reached the wood he was shot through the head by a sniper. His loss was very keenly felt throughout the battalion but especially his company, who held him in very high regard.

Another young leader, Lieutenant Jack Lyons MM, MSM also led his men of the 17th Battalion forward that day. Wounded several times in prior battles, Lyons' final, mortal wound came here in the morass before Passchendaele. After capturing their initial objectives they realised both flanks were in the air and enemy

Top: *Dubbed 'Hell Fire Corner', this exposed spot on the Menin Road was notorious for being particularly dangerous*

Above: *L-R: Theo, William and George Seabrook from Sydney were all killed at the Battle of Menin Road serving with the 17th Battalion*

Right: *A memorial to the men of the 5th Australian Division who died fighting thousands of miles from home*

Below: *A gunner from the 1st Australian Siege Battery at Birr Cross Roads awaits the order to fire, two days before the main attack on Polygon Wood*

TO THE OFFICERS NON - COMMISSIONED
OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE
FIFTH
AUSTRALIAN
DIVISION
WHO FOUGHT IN
FRANCE AND BELGIUM
1916 1917 · · 1918
FROMELLES · BAPAUME · BEAUMETZ · DOIGNIES · LOUVERVAL
BULLECOURT · 3RD BATTLE OF YPRES · POLYGON WOOD
BROODSEINDE · BATTLE OF AMIENS · VILLERS BRETONNEUX
MORLANCOURT · 8TH AUGUST · VAUVILLERS · PERONNE
HINDENBURG LINE · JONCOURT

counterattacks forced them back. Lyons was wounded and placed in a concrete pillbox. When they retook the ground his men found this “grand fighter, and favourite officer with all the lads”, was dead. Lyons was posthumously awarded the Military Cross for his actions.

Williams’ body was recovered and laid to rest in Tyne Cot Cemetery. But like so many others, Lyons’ remains were never recovered, so his name is on the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, alongside nearly 55,000 others from that dreadful battle. War correspondent Bean was pessimistic about the chance of further success. He also suggested that some men at the end of their tether were by now simply making their way to the rear. After such heavy fighting in now increasingly hopeless conditions, it is little wonder that men became psychological casualties. With nerves at breaking point some cracked. Despite their bravado, of course, the Australians were just as susceptible to war neuroses or ‘shell-shock’ as any other troops.

As conditions worsened, the attacking front narrowed as it became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to move forward men, supplies and artillery to support further attacks. Lieutenant George Carson of the 33rd Battalion said it took them two days to reach their jumping off lines, after which they fought all day in futile conditions, up to their armpits in mud: “Absolutely hopeless. Copped absolute hell for eight days before being relieved.” Yet the Australians and New Zealanders were involved in two more futile attempts to reach Passchendaele. On 12 October they suffered another 4,217 casualties. For the New Zealanders it was the blackest day of the war, taking some 2,700 casualties, including almost 900 dead.

Exhausted, the Anzacs were relieved by the Canadian Corps on 18 October. They resorted to step-by-step attacks with more limited objectives and adequate artillery support. Australians and New Zealanders were involved in minor operations on their flanks as the Canadians slowly ground forward from 26 October until they finally captured the village of Passchendaele on a narrow front on 6 November 1917. The battle was over.

Counting the cost

Third Ypres, or the Battle of Passchendaele, lasted for just over three months. The BEF had advanced its line eastwards from Ypres a mere five miles (8km) and captured a narrow, near untenable portion of the Passchendaele Ridge. At a cost of around half-a-million men on both sides (slightly more than half on the allied side), very little had been gained strategically. Both sides had suffered severe losses and run their armies into the ground. That would have alarming consequences in 1918 when the BEF faced a German Army which had bolstered its numbers through the collapse of the Eastern Front. To complete the futility of Passchendaele, when the German spring offensive was launched, everything the allies had gained in the autumn of 1917 was lost in a matter of days.

1917 was the worst year of the war for the Australians, who suffered nearly 77,000 battle casualties during the year including around 20,000 dead. Of those totals, the three months at Passchendaele had accounted for 38,000 Australian casualties of whom about 12,000 died. The New Zealand Division suffered over 5,000 casualties. In addition to leaders such as William Seabrook, Ray Single, Hubert Thompson, Humphrey Scott, Charles Williams and Jack Lyons, who all fell at Passchendaele, there was another. Major Frederick Tubb VC, hit by a sniper at Menin Road on 20 September, was being evacuated to the rear on a stretcher when he was wounded again by artillery fire and died soon after. For an all-volunteer force, the heavy losses incurred in 1917 would have serious consequences in 1918. Potential leaders held back in late 1917 and early 1918 would emerge to take command of the shattered remnants of Australian units during the final, desperate battles leading to victory in November. During these last battles many Australian battalions, once 1,000-strong, were lucky if they could field 200-300 men. So many had marched down the Menin Road, along the duckboards, and across the wilderness of putrid, water-filled shell holes of Passchendaele. So many never to return.

FURTHER READING

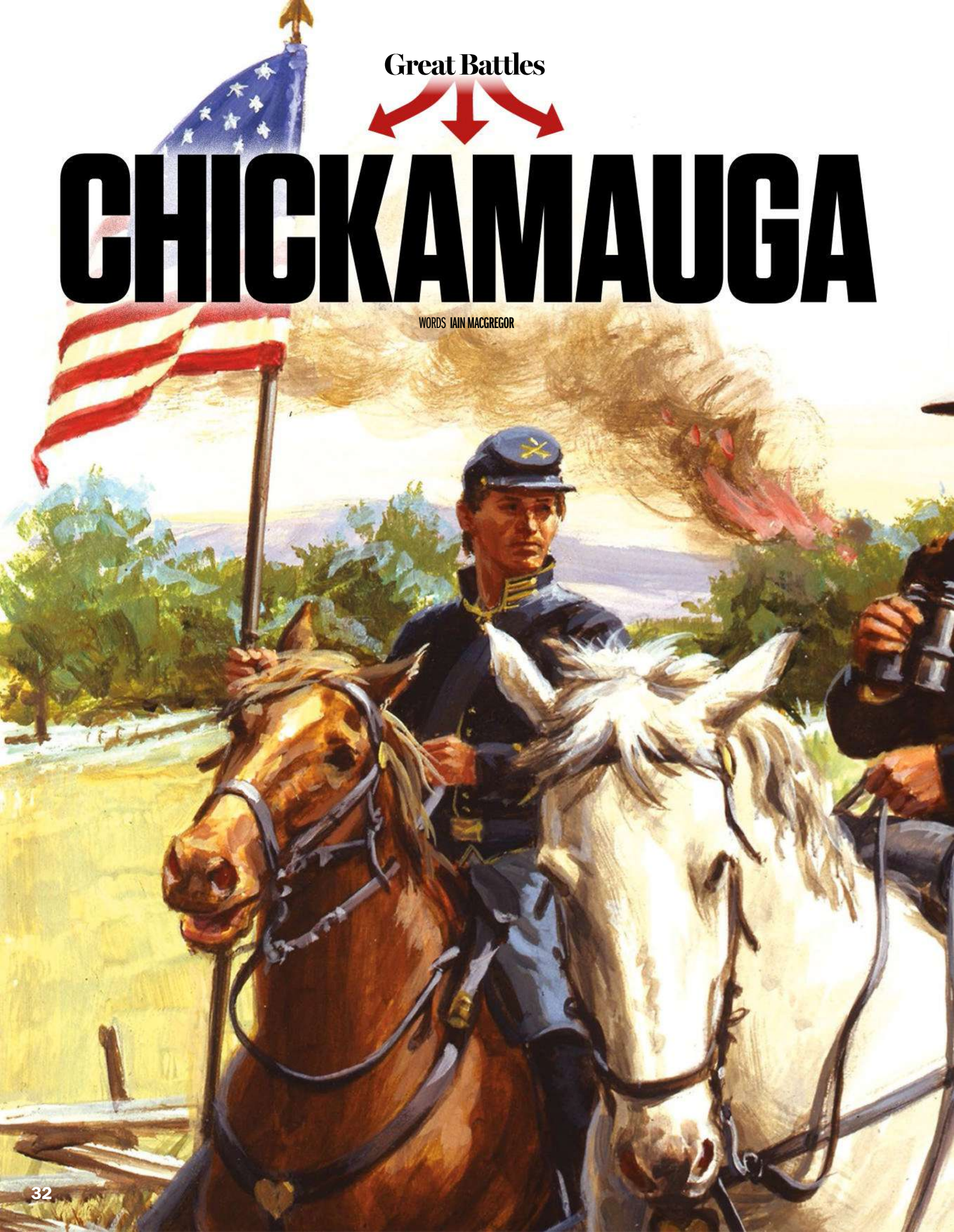
- Lee, Roger, *The Battle of Menin Road*, 1917 (2018)
- Westerman, William, *The Battle of Broodseinde Ridge*, 1917 (2018)
- Passlow, Jonathan, *The Battle of Polygon Wood*, 1917 (2018)
- Finlayson, Ian, *The Battle of Passchendaele*, 1917 (2020)

Australian walking wounded on the Menin Road returning from the front

Images © AWM, Alamy, Getty

CHICKAMAUGA

WORDS IAIN MACGREGOR



CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE • 18-20 SEPTEMBER 1863

With its fortunes looking grim after defeat at Gettysburg, the reinforced Confederate Army of Tennessee looked to beat the advancing Union Army of the Cumberland outside the vital transportation railway hub of Chattanooga

By August 1863, the Confederacy seemed in dire straits. President Jefferson Davis and his key advisers and military commanders debated long and hard about what their next step should be. Robert E Lee's second attempt to take the war to the north and inflict a decisive defeat that would bring the Union to the negotiating table had failed. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, fresh from its spectacular triumph that spring at Chancellorsville, had been heavily repulsed a few months later at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, suffering irreplaceable losses of men and commanders.

At the same time as this news arrived at Davis' government in Richmond, so General Ulysses S Grant's capture of the vital Confederate port of Vicksburg quickly followed. Now the Union navy dominated the Mississippi River, splitting the Confederacy in half. It seemed only a matter of time before more western strongholds fell.

The Union Army of the Cumberland, led by General William S Rosecrans, was now on a relentless advance to capture all of Tennessee, destroy the Confederate forces led by General Braxton Bragg, and seize the vital railway terminal in the city of Chattanooga, which lay on the banks of the Tennessee River north

"NOW THE UNION NAVY DOMINATED THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, SPLITTING THE CONFEDERACY IN HALF. IT SEEMED ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE MORE WESTERN STRONGHOLDS FELL"

A tactical defeat for the Union forces at Chickamauga became a strategic victory due to Confederate inaction in the aftermath of the battle

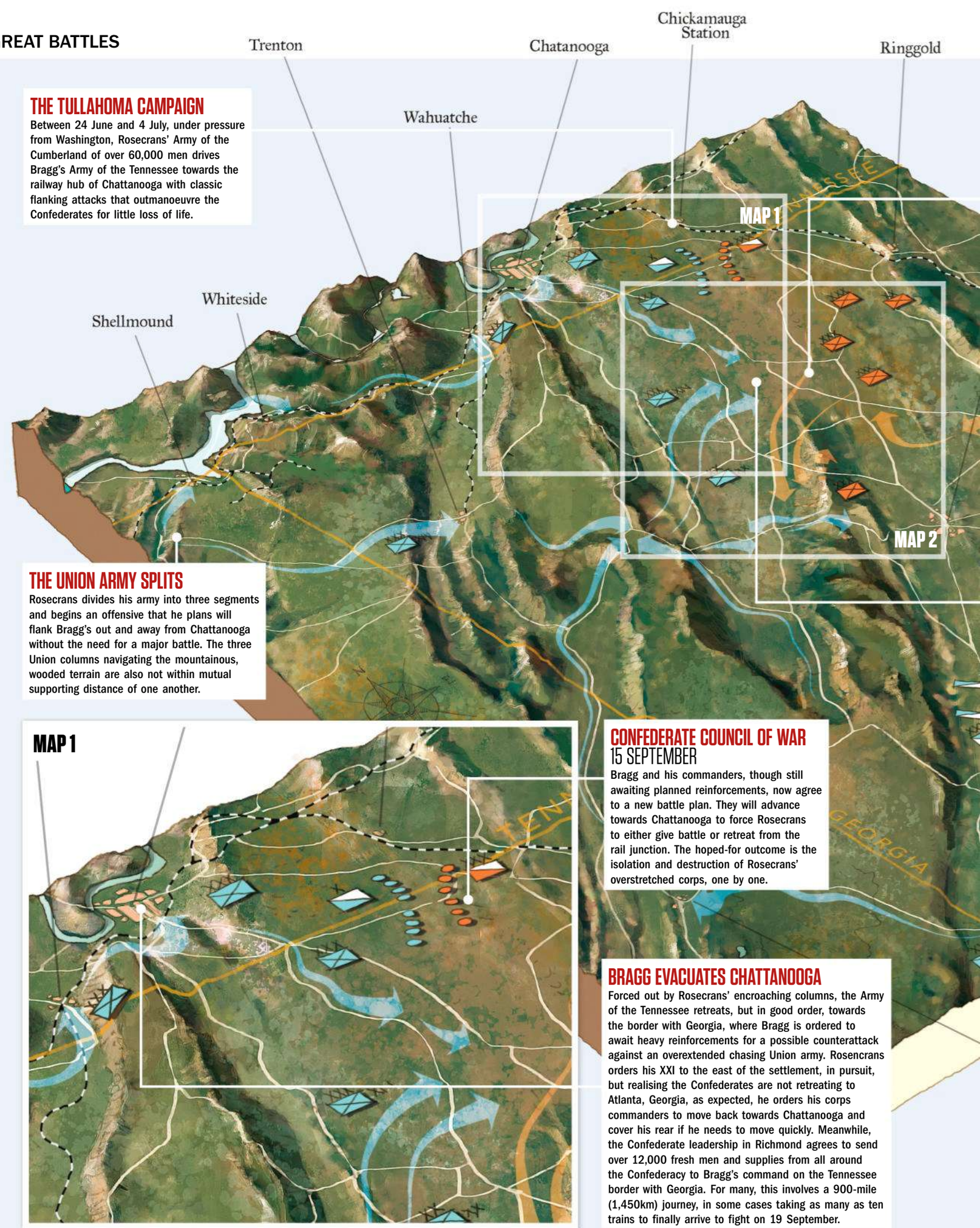
OPPOSING FORCES

UNION	VS	CONFEDERATE
LEADER William S Rosecrans		**LEADER** Braxton Bragg
TOTAL FORCES 60,000		**TOTAL FORCES** 65,000

Images: Getty

THE TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN

Between 24 June and 4 July, under pressure from Washington, Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland of over 60,000 men drives Bragg's Army of the Tennessee towards the railway hub of Chattanooga with classic flanking attacks that outmanoeuvre the Confederates for little loss of life.



THE UNION ARMY SPLITS

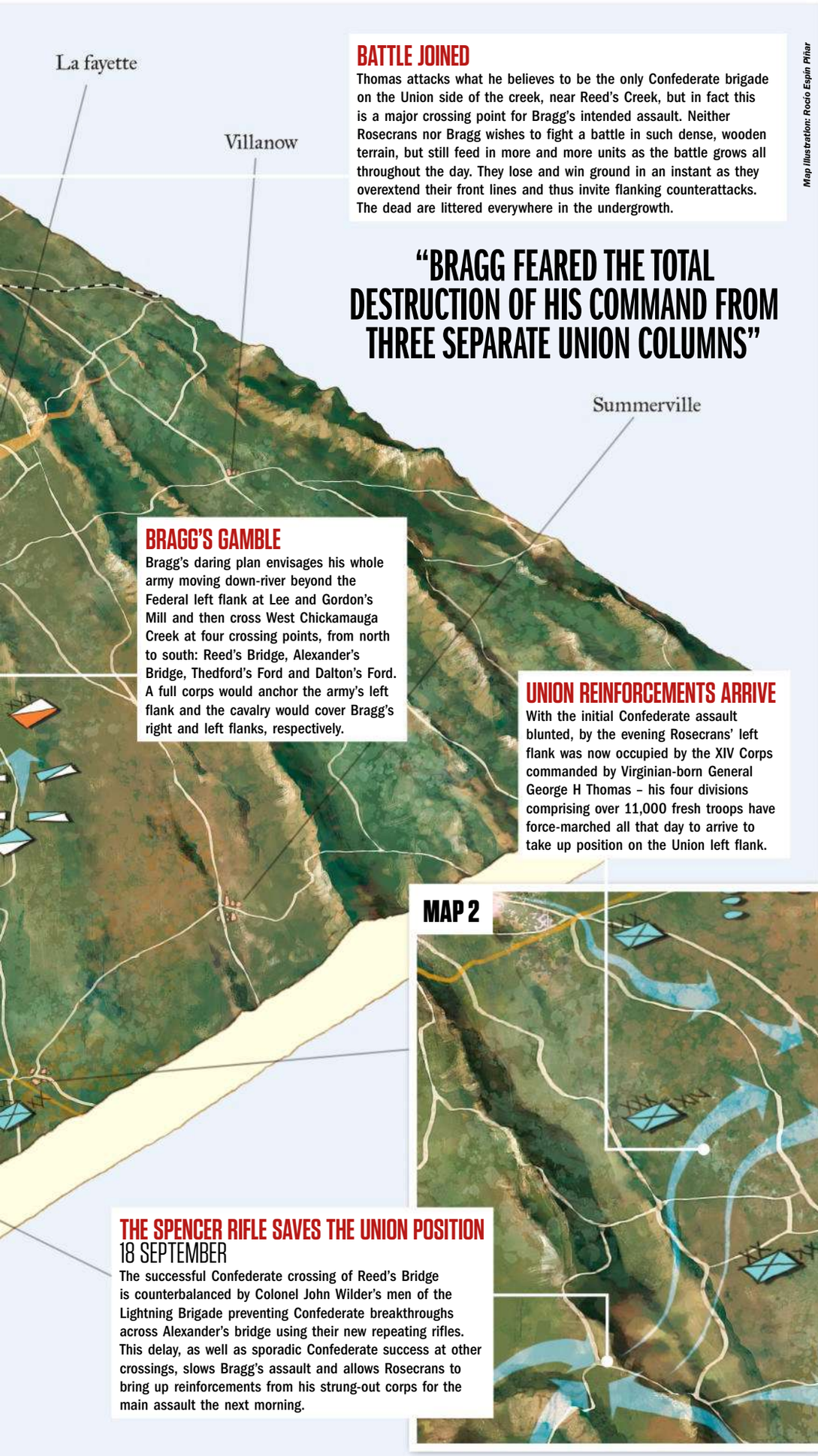
Rosecrans divides his army into three segments and begins an offensive that he plans will flank Bragg's out and away from Chattanooga without the need for a major battle. The three Union columns navigating the mountainous, wooded terrain are also not within mutual supporting distance of one another.

CONFEDERATE COUNCIL OF WAR
15 SEPTEMBER

Bragg and his commanders, though still awaiting planned reinforcements, now agree to a new battle plan. They will advance towards Chattanooga to force Rosecrans to either give battle or retreat from the rail junction. The hoped-for outcome is the isolation and destruction of Rosecrans' overstretched corps, one by one.

BRAGG EVACUATES CHATTANOOGA

Forced out by Rosecrans' encroaching columns, the Army of the Tennessee retreats, but in good order, towards the border with Georgia, where Bragg is ordered to await heavy reinforcements for a possible counterattack against an overextended chasing Union army. Rosencrans orders his XXI to the east of the settlement, in pursuit, but realising the Confederates are not retreating to Atlanta, Georgia, as expected, he orders his corps commanders to move back towards Chattanooga and cover his rear if he needs to move quickly. Meanwhile, the Confederate leadership in Richmond agrees to send over 12,000 fresh men and supplies from all around the Confederacy to Bragg's command on the Tennessee border with Georgia. For many, this involves a 900-mile (1,450km) journey, in some cases taking as many as ten trains to finally arrive to fight on 19 September.


La fayette
Villanow
Summerville
BATTLE JOINED
Thomas attacks what he believes to be the only Confederate brigade on the Union side of the creek, near Reed's Creek, but in fact this is a major crossing point for Bragg's intended assault. Neither Rosecrans nor Bragg wishes to fight a battle in such dense, wooden terrain, but still feed in more and more units as the battle grows all throughout the day. They lose and win ground in an instant as they overextend their front lines and thus invite flanking counterattacks. The dead are littered everywhere in the undergrowth.
"BRAGG FEARED THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF HIS COMMAND FROM THREE SEPARATE UNION COLUMNS"
BRAGG'S GAMBLE
Bragg's daring plan envisages his whole army moving down-river beyond the Federal left flank at Lee and Gordon's Mill and then cross West Chickamauga Creek at four crossing points, from north to south: Reed's Bridge, Alexander's Bridge, Thedford's Ford and Dalton's Ford. A full corps would anchor the army's left flank and the cavalry would cover Bragg's right and left flanks, respectively.
UNION REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE
With the initial Confederate assault blunted, by the evening Rosecrans' left flank was now occupied by the XIV Corps commanded by Virginian-born General George H Thomas – his four divisions comprising over 11,000 fresh troops have force-marched all that day to arrive to take up position on the Union left flank.
MAP 2
THE SPENCER RIFLE SAVES THE UNION POSITION
18 SEPTEMBER
The successful Confederate crossing of Reed's Bridge is counterbalanced by Colonel John Wilder's men of the Lightning Brigade preventing Confederate breakthroughs across Alexander's bridge using their new repeating rifles. This delay, as well as sporadic Confederate success at other crossings, slows Bragg's assault and allows Rosecrans to bring up reinforcements from his strung-out corps for the main assault the next morning.

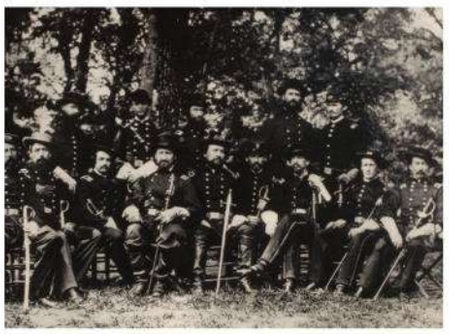
Map illustration: Rocío Espín Piñar

of the Appalachian Mountains. If successful, Union forces would then be able to plunge deep into the Confederate heartlands. Davis, sensing this danger, now took a huge gamble.

Although the focus of his administration in Richmond had been on Lee's campaigning in the eastern theatre, which drew the bulk of men and materiel, Davis realised the time had come for the western command to be reinforced for a concerted effort to save Tennessee. The Army of Northern Virginia would go on the defensive and free up two divisions, led by Lieutenant General James Longstreet, to transfer to Bragg's Army of Tennessee and serve under his command. This would bring its strength to over 65,000 men – enough to pose a serious threat to Rosecrans' 60,000 troops. Ironically, the outcome Davis hoped for had been one his western armies (containing some units he would use now) had failed to deliver at the Battle of Shiloh the year before. The carnage would be the same, however.

The Cumberland's campaign

The Army of the Cumberland's campaigning that spring and summer had seen them execute Rosecrans' plan of surprising the enemy by feinting an assault across the Tennessee River north of Chattanooga while the real offensive commenced to its south. Rosecrans' objective was to seize the city and its vital railway connections to the southern supply depots in Georgia. Caught off-balance, Bragg feared the total destruction of his command from three separate Union columns converging on his positions, and withdrew from Chattanooga without a fight on 8 September. Union forces now held almost all of East Tennessee and threatened entry into Georgia, where Bragg's depleted forces were now entrenched along its borders by LaFayette.



***Above:** Major General William S Rosecrans pictured with his staff*

***Below:** James Blair Steedman (second from left), a general in the Union forces, served with distinction at the Battle of Chickamauga and the Battle of Nashville*

It was now that Davis ordered Bragg to go on the offensive. Help was arriving from all corners of the Confederacy, bringing his army's strength up to parity with Rosecrans. Longstreet's two divisions from the Army of Northern Virginia would arrive piecemeal throughout the two days of coming fighting.

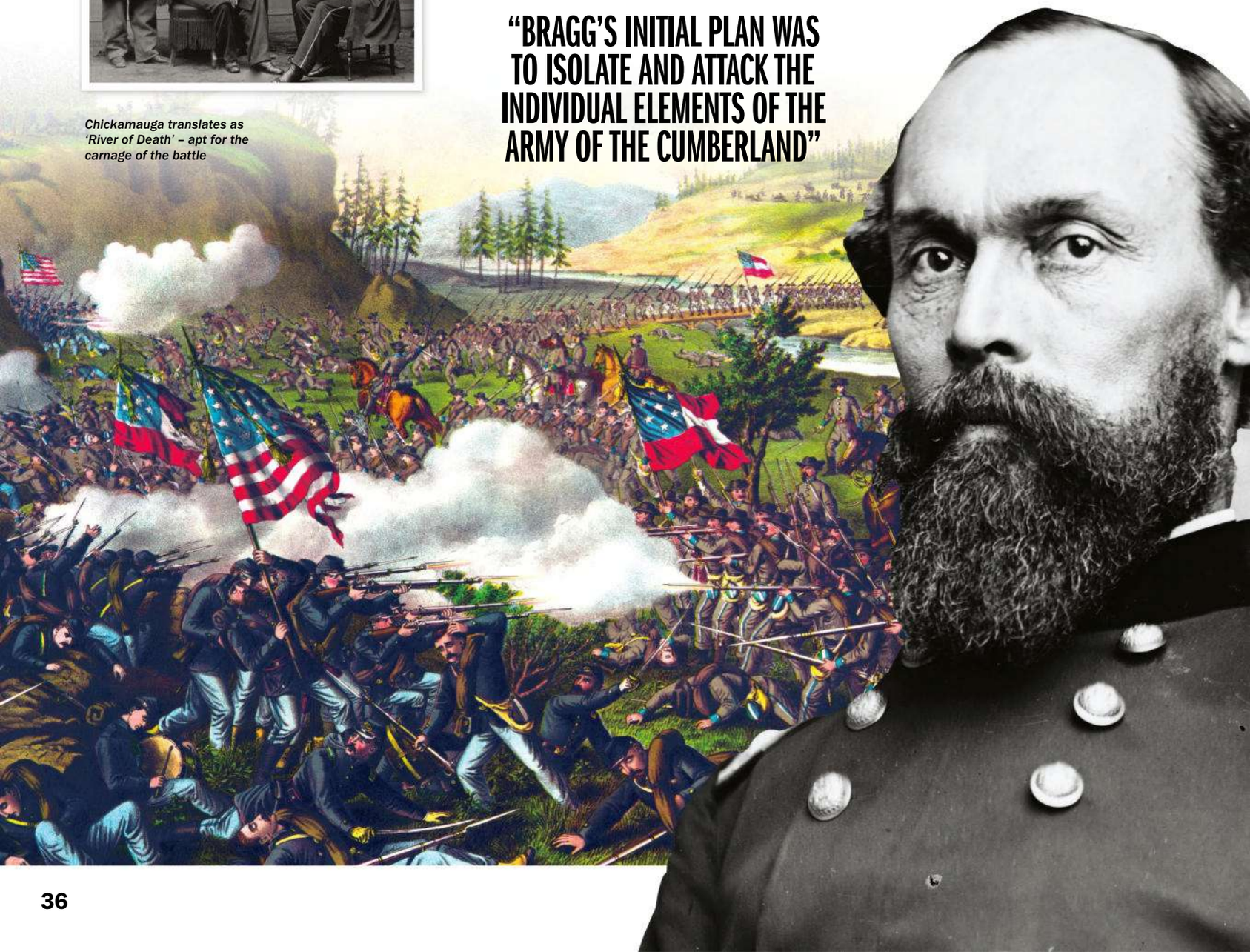
Flushed with believing his army had achieved its objectives, Rosecrans overextended his reach, allowing various corps commanders latitude to pursue the retreating Confederate forces into Georgia. While he believed Tennessee's fall seemed within reach, he had little indication that Bragg was preparing for a decisive offensive himself from his base at LaFayette.

With Longstreet's divisions at that point yet to arrive, Bragg's initial plan was to isolate and attack the individual elements of the Army of the Cumberland making their way through the mountain passes south of Chattanooga. With fresh troops he hoped to bring overwhelming force against smaller, weaker enemy units. However, unlike the Union army he faced, which by now had been campaigning for well over a year together, Bragg's hastily reinforced army immediately displayed a lack of cohesiveness; its planned surprise assaults were poorly executed and Bragg's commanders displayed poor communication and leadership on the 11 and 13 September.

As the coming battle would see, manoeuvring large formations of troops supported by cavalry and artillery was highly problematic due to the rough terrain and dense foliage of the area. In some cases, infantry commanders did not have room to get their whole formation into a firing line, while artillery officers could not actually see their enemy clearly and feared firing on their own troops. This 'fog of war' confusion was compounded by poor communication between units, from corps headquarters through to brigade and down to regimental level. This would have catastrophic consequences once a full-scale battle was underway days later.

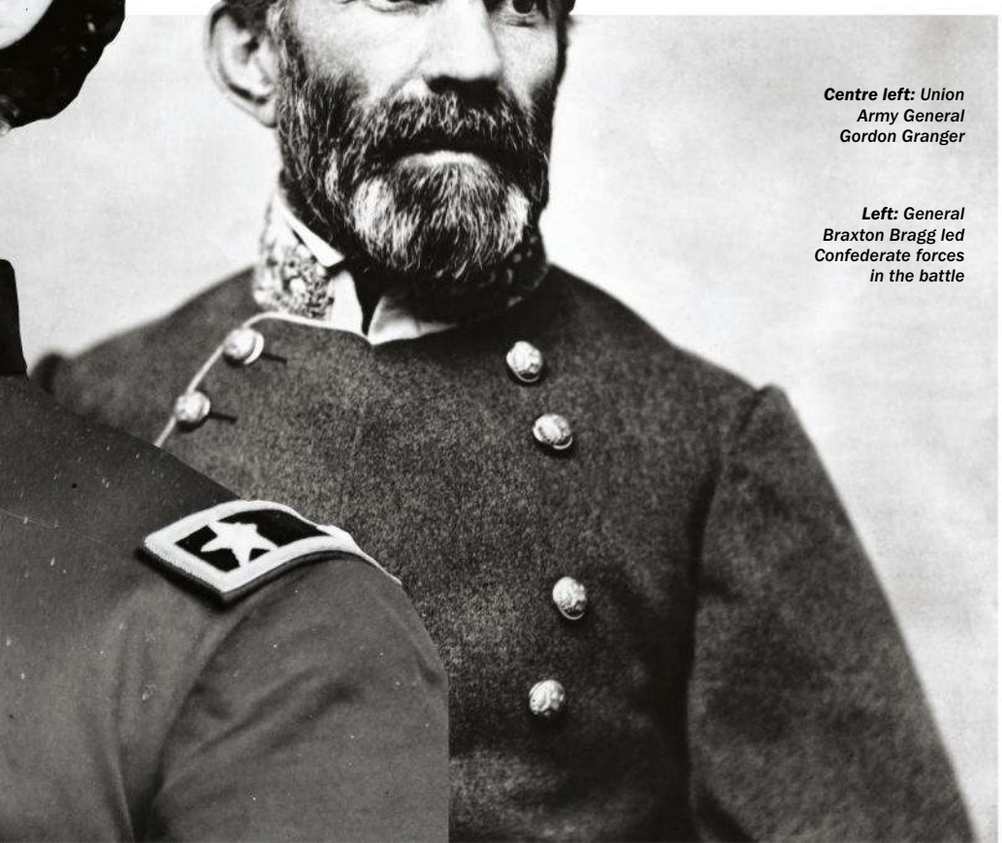
Now alerted to the danger of new Confederate formations in his theatre, Rosecrans quickly ordered all units to reassemble, and by 17 September all four corps were strung along a 20-mile (32km) line next to the west bank of Chickamauga Creek. The name Chickamauga was thought to be an old Cherokee word that translates as 'River of Death' – apt for what was to come in the next two days.

"BRAGG'S INITIAL PLAN WAS TO ISOLATE AND ATTACK THE INDIVIDUAL ELEMENTS OF THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND"



Chickamauga translates as 'River of Death' – apt for the carnage of the battle

***Above:** Ulysses S Grant (left) and his staff on Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, 1863*



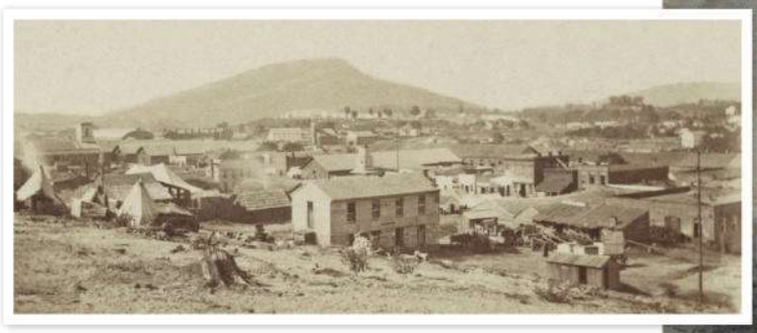
***Centre left:** Union Army General Gordon Granger*

***Left:** General Braxton Bragg led Confederate forces in the battle*

Bloodbath at the creek

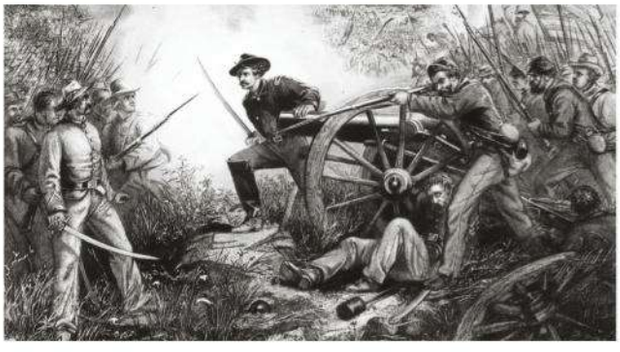
On 18 September, with the support of fresh units led by General John B Hood finally in his ranks, Bragg ordered an evening advance across the creek by the cavalry of Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest's corps onto the Union left flank. It was met with unexpectedly strong Union resistance as outnumbered Union troops used the new Spencer repeating rifle to stall the momentum of the larger Confederate force. Fierce fighting now took place for control of a pivotal crossing point, and by sunset the Confederates were well established to continue their attack the following day. Bragg, however, was unaware that Rosecrans' perceived weak left flank had now been reinforced by Major General Thomas' whole corps through a forced march.

Fighting began again the following morning as Bragg's men assaulted the Union left flank occupied by Thomas, which again failed to make the desired breakthrough. The casualties on both sides were heavy,



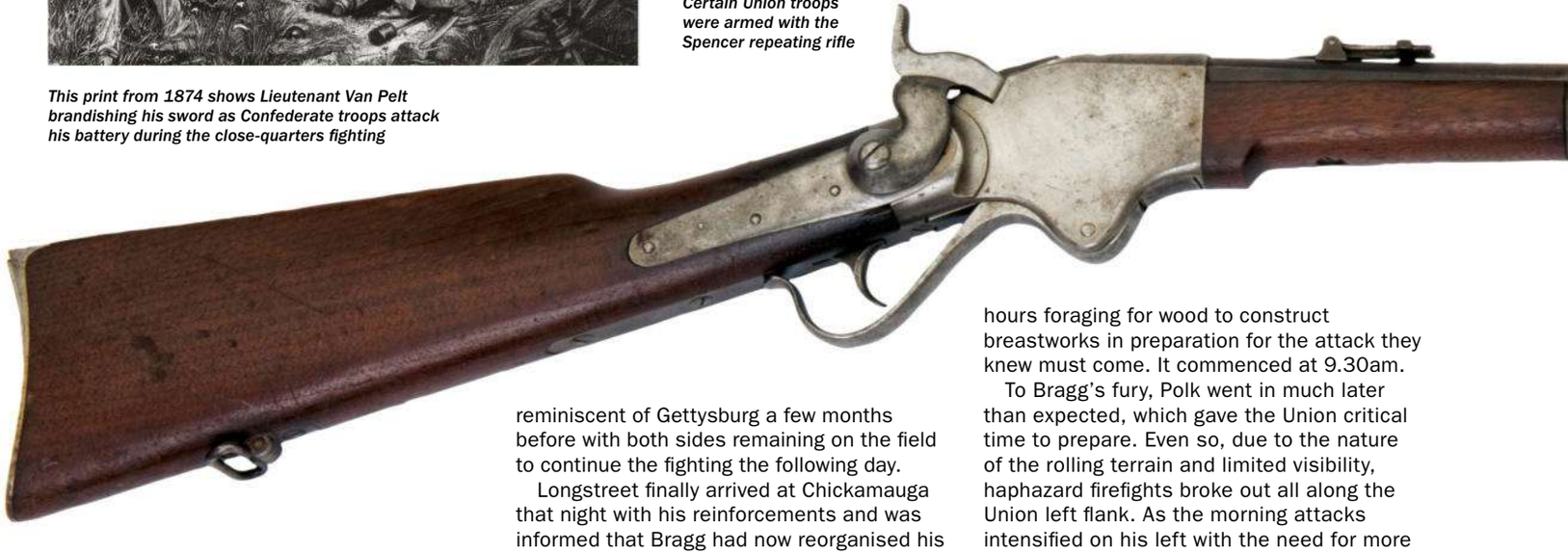
Chattanooga, with Lookout Mountain in the distance. The Union Army retreated to the city after the battle

Chattanooga Valley from Lookout Mountain



This print from 1874 shows Lieutenant Van Pelt brandishing his sword as Confederate troops attack his battery during the close-quarters fighting

Certain Union troops were armed with the Spencer repeating rifle



“INSTEAD OF DESTROYING THE UNION FORCES, BRAGG OPTED TO BOTTLE UP ROSECRANS IN THE CITY AND STARVE HIM OUT”

reminiscent of Gettysburg a few months before with both sides remaining on the field to continue the fighting the following day.

Longstreet finally arrived at Chickamauga that night with his reinforcements and was informed that Bragg had now reorganised his army into two grand wings, his fresh Virginians facing the Union left set to attack once Rosecrans’ right flank came under attack from Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk’s main assault, which Bragg believed was the weakest point. Timing and communication between the wing commanders were crucial. Meanwhile the Union troops spent valuable hours foraging for wood to construct breastworks in preparation for the attack they knew must come. It commenced at 9.30am.

To Bragg’s fury, Polk went in much later than expected, which gave the Union critical time to prepare. Even so, due to the nature of the rolling terrain and limited visibility, haphazard firefights broke out all along the Union left flank. As the morning attacks intensified on his left with the need for more units to be shifted to prevent a Confederate breakthrough, by 11.30am Rosecrans was misinformed of a gap in his line on the right. He disastrously ordered Brigadier General Thomas Wood’s division to march out of their critical position to shore up the phantom space. The timing was fortuitous for Bragg. Wood’s division vacated its ground

The Confederate line advances through woodland toward Union troops at twilight

just as Longstreet's Virginians mounted an assault upon it. It led to a rout: one-third of the Union army, including Rosecrans himself, was driven from the field as more Confederates poured through and rolled up the Union line.

A complete disaster was averted when veteran Union units commanded by Major General Thomas spontaneously rallied to create a new defensive line on the key high ground situated on Horseshoe Ridge and Snodgrass Hill. Despite determined Confederate assaults to finish the job, the makeshift Union line, supported with artillery, held out until the end of the day, earning Thomas the sobriquet the 'Rock of Chickamauga'. His battered defenders marched back into Chattanooga that night, leaving the field to the victorious Confederates. The besiegers had become the besieged.

Aftermath

The Army of the Cumberland had not been destroyed in the field. The butcher's bill was heavier than even Shiloh the previous year. Bragg had lost 30 percent of his army, over 18,000 men (with over 2,000 killed), while the Army of the Cumberland had suffered 16,000 casualties (over 1,600 killed). Crucially for the Army of Tennessee's ability to conduct further offensives, ten Confederate generals and a greater number of frontline junior officers had been killed or wounded, limiting the performance of what had been a hastily constructed force. Within the city, Rosecrans refused to accept his corps commander's desire to counterattack the following day and opted instead to dig in and await relief.

Although he had secured the heights above Chattanooga, Bragg had no idea of the strength or morale of Rosecrans forces, and fearful of the toll the fighting had exacted on his army, his inaction turned a tactical triumph for the South into a strategic defeat. Against the wishes of Longstreet and Bedford Forrest to pursue and destroy what remained of the Union forces, he opted to bottle up Rosecrans in the city and starve him out. He positioned artillery on the heights of Lookout Mountain south of the city and his infantry would block road and river routes from the east and west.

Both commanders' reputations for effective leadership were tarnished. Bragg's commanders lambasted his lack of desire to take the risk to finish off the enemy, while sitting behind his fortifications as his troops' supplies and morale plummeted, Rosecrans stewed over his poor leadership that brought about his defeat on the battlefield. It was a view mirrored by the Washington press and President Abraham Lincoln.

Images: Alamy, Getty

LETTERS FROM THE EASTERN FRONT

Some of the most horrific fighting of WWII took place in 1942 as Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union began to grind to a halt. Letters from German soldiers in the east during this critical year reveal what life was like on the frontline

WORDS **MAREK SOBIERALSKI**

Throughout 1942, the Wehrmacht undertook a number of major military offensives against the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front, and the soldiers there experienced some of the most brutal and deadly fighting of the war. Notable examples include Case Blue, which was launched in June 1942 and was a large-scale offensive aimed at capturing the oil-rich Caucasus region and the city of Stalingrad. The Siege of Sevastopol had begun back in October 1941, with the German forces laying siege to the port city on the Crimean Peninsula. The series of engagements that became known as the Battle of Rzhev began in January 1942, and continued for several months, with both sides suffering heavy losses. During the series of battles fought in the city of Kharkov in eastern Ukraine, the Germans initially captured the city in May 1942, but the Soviets launched a counteroffensive that pushed them back. The Wehrmacht made significant gains in the early stages of 1942, but ultimately suffered several significant defeats that marked a turning point in the war on the Eastern Front.

The front itself stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and was the largest and bloodiest theatre of the war, with up to 80 per cent of German military casualties occurring there. As the war dragged on, soldiers faced increasingly difficult conditions. The fighting did not relent in the long and brutal winter weather, with temperatures plummeting well below freezing. Supply lines were stretched thin, making it difficult to provide adequate food, clothing and medical care to the troops. Diseases such as typhus and dysentery were rampant, and many soldiers suffered from frostbite and other cold-related issues. By the end of the war, German soldiers on the Eastern Front had suffered enormous casualties, with estimates of military deaths ranging from 3.5 to 5.5 million. It was also the site of some of the most horrific war crimes of the conflict, with German troops regularly carrying out mass executions.

But what of the Wehrmacht soldiers who were fighting these battles? We can get a glimpse into the thoughts, attitudes, fears and impressions of some of those men from their private letters that were sent to families and friends back home. The Feldpost, the German military mail service, was invaluable to the soldiers as well as their loved ones, as it was the only way to stay in touch during months of separation. Providing soldiers with the means to write letters was an important way to maintain the morale and connections of the fighting troops during the war, as well as to keep the home front informed and supportive of the war effort.

Some of these communications were intercepted by a special unit of Department II (information and intelligence) of the Polish Home Army, and translated into Polish so they could be used to analyse the mood among the German soldiers fighting in the Soviet Union. Some of the correspondence also contained important information about the deployment of Wehrmacht units, losses suffered and areas of combat, all of which was of value to Allied intelligence. They are also a valuable resource for the study of the soldiers' motivations for their actions – including genocide and war crimes.

Presented here is the first English language translation of a selection of fragments from some of those letters. The originals are stored at the Archiwum Akt Nowych records storage facility in Warsaw, and are reproduced here courtesy of that organisation and the Karta Foundation.

German soldiers in a trench on the Eastern Front. The Nazi push into the Soviet Union ultimately ended in defeat

APRIL

German forces are pushed back from Moscow following the Soviet winter counteroffensive and the Rzhev-Vyazma strategic operations

PRIVATE ERWIN MATULA TO THE MATULA FAMILY

Warm greetings from Minsk. Brest-Litovsk is behind us. They must really need us, seeing as they are transporting us at a rapid speed. Everything is flat, no mountains, nothing, just the Russian plains. Only graves and then more graves on the road by the railway. Downed planes, overturned trucks, burnt armoured cars and huge craters from grenades accompany us all the way along the road.

PRIVATE KARL DRESCHLER TO CORPORAL SEPPRAUH

[…] We had our first three killed yesterday. Those damned partisans, as spring approaches, they are getting bolder. They attacked a truck in broad daylight, three soldiers were shot and the vehicle set on fire, and to add to that, they also took the dead soldiers' uniforms. How it all happened, nobody knows, because the dead cannot speak. The partisans are made up of remnants of shattered formations, parachutists and civilians. In a word, we have before us a terrible and cruel enemy that sometimes fights in German uniforms.

PRIVATE ERYK ENLITZ TO HIS MOTHER KLARA WEINGART

[…] I tell you, anywhere the Germans appear, it's like a swarm of locusts has passed through: everything eaten to the core. The Russians took nothing from the peasants and preferred to bring themselves food in by plane; and we leave the peasants with only their lives, and perhaps a few potatoes.

PRIVATE GERHARD BRANDENBURG TO LILLI BRANDENBURG

Our battalion is now on the attack, I'm lying here, completely cut off, we receive no food supplies. In a word, I've never had it so bad in all my life. Lice and bed bugs give us no respite neither day or night. My body is so completely scratched – so much so that a person can lose their mind and go crazy. My feet are never dry, I'm almost knee-deep in water and mud – I can sometimes cry from rage. You cannot imagine this. If only this war with Russia could find its end.

MAY

This month sees the Second Battle of Kharkov, (Operation Fredericus), an Axis counteroffensive against the Red Army's Izium bridgehead

CORPORAL BECKER TO PAULA BECKER

I must trouble you, my dear, with some questions. Well, there is a generally unpleasant and downcast mood among us frontline soldiers concerning our homeland. It is said here that the wives of soldiers are so unfaithful that up to 80 per cent of these women have relations with others, taking advantage of their husbands' absence. Write to me and let me know if this is possible, although there must be some truth to it, because, for example, next to me lies a staff sergeant, a father of six children, who was forced to divorce his wife; further, a certain Oberfeldwebel [sergeant] went home on leave as his wife had died. It turned out that she was five months pregnant and she had poisoned herself. He came back in such a deplorable state […]

CORPORAL SCHOMONG

If we are to stay here for one more winter, then I see the future as very bleak. Troops that survived the winter in Russia are incapable of undertaking new battles, and the new soldier will never do what we have done. Therefore the experienced are assigned to new units without even giving them a week's leave.

***Right:** German troops struggle to free a car from deep mud in the bitter winter of 1942*

AUGUST

The Battle of Stalingrad begins on 23 August. Stalin's Order No 227 of "Not one step back" sees the creation of new units such as the penal battalion and blocking battalion

CORPORAL OTTO FRIEDL TO CHARLOTTE FRIEDL

I am convinced that as a result of the occupation of these areas, the economic conditions in the Reich will improve. Economically, there is an exemplary order here, on every farm there is some special breeding programme. […]

Stalin, speaking of the Soviet paradise, was right to some extent, because this country is fertile, bountiful and very large, but what of it, if the population cannot benefit from this wealth. Everyone had to work on these estates, except for the disabled and elderly, and could only use small gardens that they were assigned. Work paid pennies or not at all, rations were minimal, they had to beg the commissioners for clothes. That's why there are no shops or even a tavern here. The Jews were in charge, the population [were] terrorised, they avoided conflict, fearing being sent to Siberia. I talked to someone who came back after 3-4 years there. They come across as idiots. It's a pity that our country's communists can't see the Soviet paradise, they would surely calm down and stop agitating. We will give back the Russian peasants their land, many of us will settle here, and we will establish a German economy. This village in which we are gave up without a fight […], as a result of which there is no damage. The population is already used to us, we are not allowed to take anything from them, our entire propaganda goes in this direction [to] give them as much as possible, and thus protect our rear. One thing is unfortunate, in that these people cannot be entirely trusted, as there are deceitful ones among them.

PRIVATE FRANZ SCHWÄCHER TO ANTONIA SCHWACHER

What are our beloved protégés doing back home, are they still sitting behind their stoves? We'll deal with them someday, at worst case, after the war. We hate these cowards more than the worst enemy! While we shed our blood for our country and families, they have fun in peace, and already choose the best positions for themselves in the post-war period. And we dream of getting out of this Bolshevik paradise, but cannot simply drop our guns and run home.

SEPTEMBER

During the Battle of the Caucasus, German troops climb Mount Elbrus but can't fight their way through to the Caspian Sea oilfields

CORPORAL HANS RICHTER TO BROTHER MAX

Just a few are now left from our unit. From the platoon we started the fight with, only five of us remain – some were transferred to other units, the rest were killed or [are] in hospitals. When will I see you? I hear they're already bringing in 16-year-olds. […] They don't send such young people to our advance units – the youngest in my unit is 18. Anyway, think about the advice I left you with while I was on leave. I wouldn't advise you to push to come here. Who would be left for our old parents should I die – you must be their only support. They had three of us, and now only you remain there. As for me, I'm not a pessimist, but I don't see myself coming back from this war unscathed.

CORPORAL H MILSCHKE TO S DAMMENBERG

The fact that we stand still is not the worst thing, but we shall never forget the English bombing our wives, children and homes. They will be ruthlessly punished for this. Although many of us here already have everything up to the tip of their noses, we shall always volunteer to fight against the Island.

PRIVATE ANTON FRITZ TO EMMA DICHL

I envy Ludwik that he is injured and is returning home, and so what that his leg was amputated? The main thing is that he has his head and that he got out of here. We had to leave our position and take up a winter one in the forest, again not so voluntarily. The Russians dropped 150 bombs on the neighboring village; the 11th company has been devastated.

Nazi troops surrender to their Soviet adversaries in a landscape littered with blasted trees and corpses

SH WIPPLER [A LUFTWAFFE ENGINEER] TO ILZE WIPPLER

You write, my dear, of hardships, unfortunately you have to endure until you are exhausted! I believe you when you say that you're only living now because you have to, but life is no longer fun. As for me, if you weren't there, I would have put a bullet in my head a long time ago, because I've had enough of it all. Watching this mess here and this boundless injustice everywhere, you can lose your head from despair. They value horses higher than men! To hell with all this […]! You ask, my little one, who created this war? The Germans started this war! Today the nation has lots to say, but three years ago, the enthusiasm was crazy, especially those from the PG [Parteigenosse – a party comrade, an abbreviation for NSDAP members] who today sit at home behind a warm stove! Unfortunately, the German soldier is so hopelessly stupid that he deserves only one thing, to get a good kicking. I hope the German nation will soon find out to whom it owes it all! Reading your letter, where you write that my little one keeps asking about his father – tears came to my eyes. Yes, I miss you so much that I doubt if I will last much longer. Pray for me, as I do for you, my only thought day and night is to be with you!

PLATOON LEADER PULSE TO INGE

You know only too well what is going on here. Ivan attacks constantly. We counter the attacks and the Bolsheviks suffer heavy losses in material and men. Last week we destroyed over 1,000 tanks, planes, etc. Their reserves must surely run out at some point. It's just a question of when that will happen, or whether we'll still be alive.

OCTOBER

The fierce Battles of Stalingrad and of the Caucasus continue to rage, taking a huge toll on both sides

Among the rubble and chaos of Stalingrad, a German officer points out a Soviet position

CHIEF CORPORAL BRINGS TO MARIE BRINGS

You can be sure that Göring will keep his word and that they will increase your rations. This is the reward for our efforts. Ukraine is a huge area that we will endlessly exploit. […] You can imagine how much has already been done here. But wait and see what it will be like next year. There are still thousands of kilometers of uncultivated land. If you only knew how the people here live! The poorest of our poor live a thousand times better. Let's be glad we escaped this Bolshevik plague. I don't know how we should thank our Führer that he prevented this in good time. I suppose this war in the East has been going on for too long, perhaps one more year and it'll end on that.

CORPORAL HEINZ SIEMER TO W SIEMER

Stalingrad is defending itself for too long, it will be the Verdun of the current war. We have to wait to see if they will not lift the ban on going on leave. I heard that Tommy often visits you. […] It's high time this war ended, because all our beautiful cities are lying in ruin.

CORPORAL HEINZ MEKLER TO PLATOON LEADER MAKS MEKLER

I am one of those who contribute to reducing the number of partisans. I line them up against a wall and put a bullet in the back of their head – very fun and interesting work.

PLATOON LEADER MANDL TO MINNIE MANDL

What a false nation these Bolsheviks are! When I think about how they treated our friends, who fell into their hands. Today we live among them, they realise we are the victors, so they tremble, they cry and wail, and at every opportunity they try to kiss the sleeves of our uniforms. Let one of them try to do it, I'd show them what it means touch a German uniform.

SECOND LIEUTENANT KÖRNER TO CORPORAL L KÖRNER

Don't worry about me, I am careful but ruthless. My point of view: this nation deserves only the whip, that's the only way they can be brought up; some of them have already accepted this, but most are still stubborn. Yesterday I had the opportunity to see 40 partisans, I have never seen anything like it. Only then did I realise that only we are the masters, the rest are untermenschen [subhuman].

PRIVATE LOW TO KARL HEINZ

We can feel that we are in the East. Man, we're dealing with such people here that the hair stands on end. Everything that is Muscovite, Pole and Jew – it all smells of manure. In truth, it's a pity to waste ammunition on them. Recently one of my colleagues was murdered. We are seeking the culprit, but I'm sure he won't be found. So 28 hostages have been shot up to now. And a line of more hostages will follow shortly. We feel we are not in the Reich. We have enemies everywhere. I'd love to come back, can't you make it easier for me? I'm really worried about the future! I would love to work for the Party again, not sit here in the East. I sincerely hope that I will be able to leave the army and return to the service of my beloved Party.

NOVEMBER

Operation Uranus is launched by the Soviet Union, leading to the encirclement of Axis forces in the vicinity of Stalingrad

PRIVATE E STANCZYK TO SUSANNA STANCZYK

There is no more camaraderie here in our company. My friends stole my things. The food is getting worse. Half a loaf of bread every other day. We can't stand it any longer.

PRIVATE GUSTAW HEROCH TO ALA HEROCH

So my father had his Ausweis & Wehrpaß [military booklet] taken away and is recognised as a Pole. Find out if they could do the same with me, because why am I to suffer fear, hunger, cold and misery. I didn't go voluntarily in any case.

PRIVATE KNOLLER TO PRIVATE ERICH ZIMMERMANN

If you want to "buy" chickens or eggs, you have to set out in a group of 30 men, and that amount is not enough if you venture a little farther. There's a camp of 500 partisans in our neighborhood and we can't cope with them. Every night they blow up train tracks, and yesterday, for example, a train with workers. It cost us a lot of people. Sometimes we get fake reports, and when we return, our building is on fire and the sentries aren't there. Now you at least have a picture of our service. We found two red flags outside our building this morning. When colleagues approached to remove them, they were blown [up], killed on the spot.

SENIOR CORPORAL MATECKI TO LUISE MATECKI

Apparently Franz wants to volunteer for the army. For God's sake! He must not do this! He will burn his fingers unnecessarily. Better to work hard for 20 hours, but in the Reich. I don't think he knows what they're doing to us, how they treat us, not to even mention the […] without newspapers, radio, news from around the world, cigarettes. Soon we will starve like you at home, because I know what your rations are there.

CAPTAIN EMIL FRITSCH OF THE SICHERHEITSPOLIZEI [SECURITY POLICE]

My job is to fight bandits and exterminate Jews, so the same kind of work, so far. To this day, I have already accomplished many things in this regard (I've been here nearly four months). My nerves suffered a little again, because this work is nerve-wracking, but it must be done.

OTTO HEID TO JOHANN MÜLLER

This is where all the Jews met their end, some were killed in inhumane ways. These are heroes lording over defenseless women and children. Such behavior is inhuman. The Jewish quarter is dead.

"NOTHING CAN MOVE ME ANYMORE, I KILL LEFT AND RIGHT – THE MORE I KILL, THE SOONER IT ENDS"

CORPORAL STILLER TO S STILLER

Food supplies began to run short as the German offensive into Soviet territory faltered

WACHTMEISTER HUWALD TO FRITZ BISTEN

That entire Jewish rabble is finally dead, and there weren't many of them in any case, about 17,000. It was high time to liquidate this riffraff – I'm sure they would have caused us more misfortune. The partisans have calmed down – either they're operating in another area, or they're out of ammo. We go out in groups of six to eight people, so don't worry.

SENIOR CORPORAL JÄGEL TO L SCHNEIDER

Bolsheviks are not people, they're animals! I haven't taken off my boots or uniform in four weeks. We lose ourselves here completely, and health begins to fail us too. We lie 150-200 metres opposite the Russian positions. Despair and depression overwhelms us. It is a real hell. […] The fight is very hard, the only thing that keeps us going is the thought that we are fighting for you, our beloved back home!

Red Army troops fighting in Stalingrad walk past the body of a German soldier

DECEMBER

The Germans fail to break the Soviet encirclement of the German 6th Army during the Battle of Stalingrad

CORPORAL KRAUSE

We should get on our knees and thank the Führer that he struck just in time. If the Bolsheviks came to Germany, we would only have the noose as an option for us, as you can see here only too well what Bolshevism does to people.

PRIVATE BALEONER TO HERTA KURZ

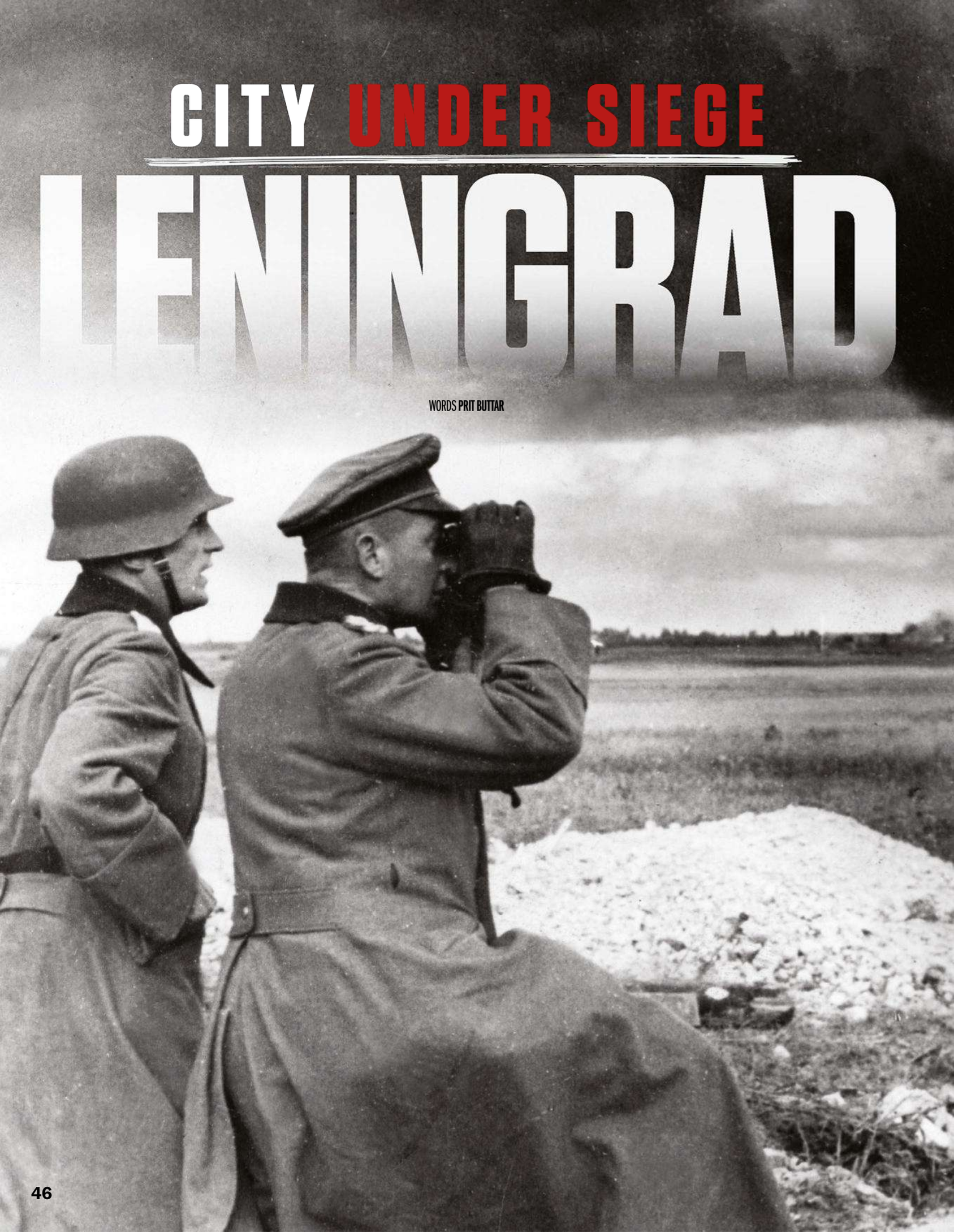
Each of us must fulfil their duties, and above all, worship and love our dear Führer, and obey his orders unconditionally. He alone leads us to victory.

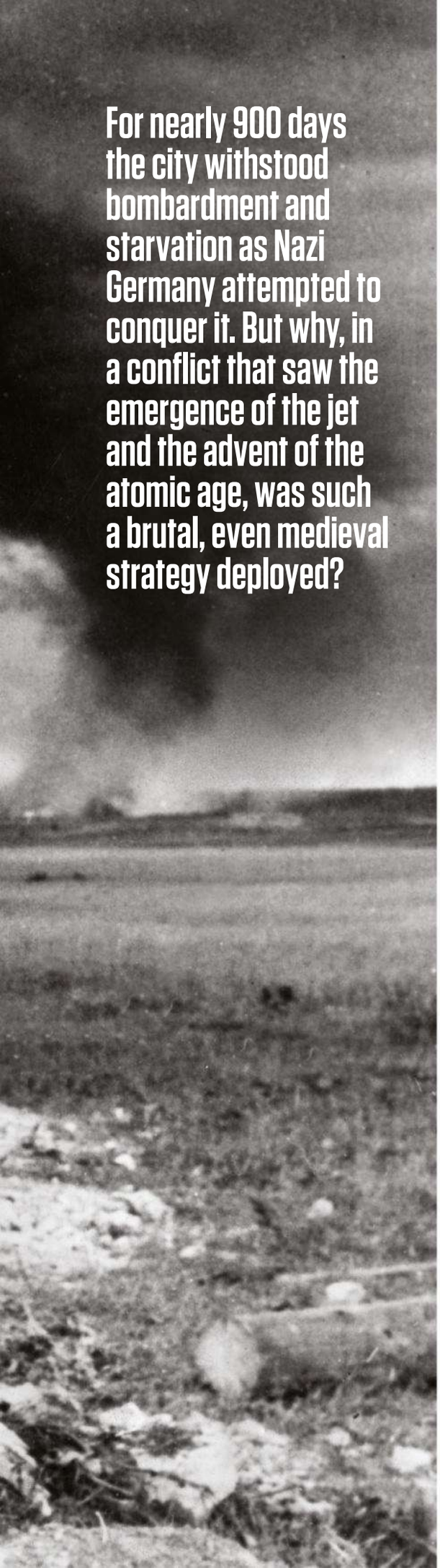
Images: Getty.

CITY UNDER SIEGE

LENINGRAD

WORDS **PRIT BUTTAR**





For nearly 900 days the city withstood bombardment and starvation as Nazi Germany attempted to conquer it. But why, in a conflict that saw the emergence of the jet and the advent of the atomic age, was such a brutal, even medieval strategy deployed?

The Second World War was a conflict of mobility and machinery, of great innovation in the seemingly endless desire of humans to find more powerful ways to subjugate and kill other humans. Tanks and trucks; bombers and fighters; rockets and ultimately ballistic missiles; submarines and aircraft carriers; jet engines; and in the end, industrialised genocide and the atomic bomb.

Yet for nearly 900 days of this complex war, which featured such a rapid development of technology, one of the great cities of Europe was almost entirely cut off from the rest of the continent, and starved – reminiscent of medieval siege tactics. Leningrad, formerly St Petersburg and Petrograd, was the second-largest city in the Soviet Union and home to much of its heavy industry. Built by Peter the Great in a large region of swamps and muddy islands in the Neva estuary, it developed at a remarkable pace through the 18th and 19th centuries and even before the death of its creator it had become the capital of Russia. It was renamed Petrograd to remove the Germanic-sounding name of St Petersburg in 1914, and just three years later it was convulsed by two revolutions, one that removed the Romanov dynasty from power and a second that brought Lenin's Bolsheviks into the limelight.

At first glance, the attempts by the Germans to isolate and then subdue the city seem to owe more to conflicts of earlier centuries than the middle of the 20th century, with siege lines that barely moved and specialist heavy artillery to bombard the city into subjugation. Outside the siege ring, relieving armies struggled towards the beleaguered population and garrison, just as armies had attempted to lift sieges in the medieval era. Even the nature of the fighting, largely on foot in inhospitable terrain, seemed closer to the battles of earlier wars.

***Left:** Major General Krueger and a German soldier observe German attacks on the defensive lines of Leningrad, 1941*

***Below:** German soldiers pictured to the east of Leningrad, where the last main road out of the city was closed off in September 1941*

***Below, right:** An aerial view of Leningrad, nestled into the diverging Neva RIver*

But closer analysis shows that the Siege of Leningrad was entirely in keeping with the darker side of the new, modern way of war. From the outset, the German invasion of the Soviet Union was a genocidal project. This was not a war to gain territory or to impose a more pliant government upon the defeated nation; it was to eliminate that nation completely, in every sense. The Soviet Union would cease to exist and its European territory would be resettled by Germans; the rich agricultural lands of Ukraine and southern Russia would be harnessed to feed the rest of Europe. This diversion of several million tons of grain from Russia and Ukraine would leave insufficient food to feed the domestic population, particularly in Soviet cities that had seen the bulk of the Soviet Union's population growth after the First World War. For the Germans, there was a simple solution: the urban populations would simply be left to starve to death.

In the initial plans drawn up by Germany for its invasion of the Soviet Union, the Leningrad region was one of two primary objectives; the other was the swift capture of Ukraine. In the case of the former, seizure of the northwest parts of the Soviet Union would give Germany complete control over the Baltic Sea and would deprive the Soviet Union of one of its major industrial centres. The capture of Leningrad, the cradle of the Russian Revolution, would also strike a lethal blow against the morale of the Soviet people. But simply capturing the city was not part of German thinking. In the context of the plan to divert huge quantities of food to the rest of Europe, it was unacceptable for the Germans for them to be left with the obligation to feed a city of over two million. From the outset, the intention was to destroy the physical structure of the city and either kill its population or drive them away to the east into the Russian hinterland, where they would be left to starve.

Both the capture of Leningrad and of Ukraine were dependent upon the complete destruction of the Red Army. Using the speed and striking power of its panzer divisions, the Wehrmacht was to destroy most of the Red Army within 125 miles (200km) of the frontier;

thereafter, it would be free to move forward to secure its objectives in the north and south, before it then turned its attention to Moscow. This was a vital consideration, as the entire invasion of the Soviet Union involved German forces advancing on diverging axes. This would only be possible if the Red Army were rendered too weak to fight.

Due to a huge underestimation of the ultimate size of the Red Army and of the output of the Soviet armaments industry, the Germans failed in this vital task. Despite its terrible losses, the Red Army survived and continued to fight. As the Wehrmacht edged closer to Leningrad, the confidence that had filled German reports was replaced by a growing sense of unease. Nevertheless, during September the leading German units reached the southern shore of Lake Ladoga, to the east of Leningrad. Land contact between the city and the rest of the Soviet Union was cut.

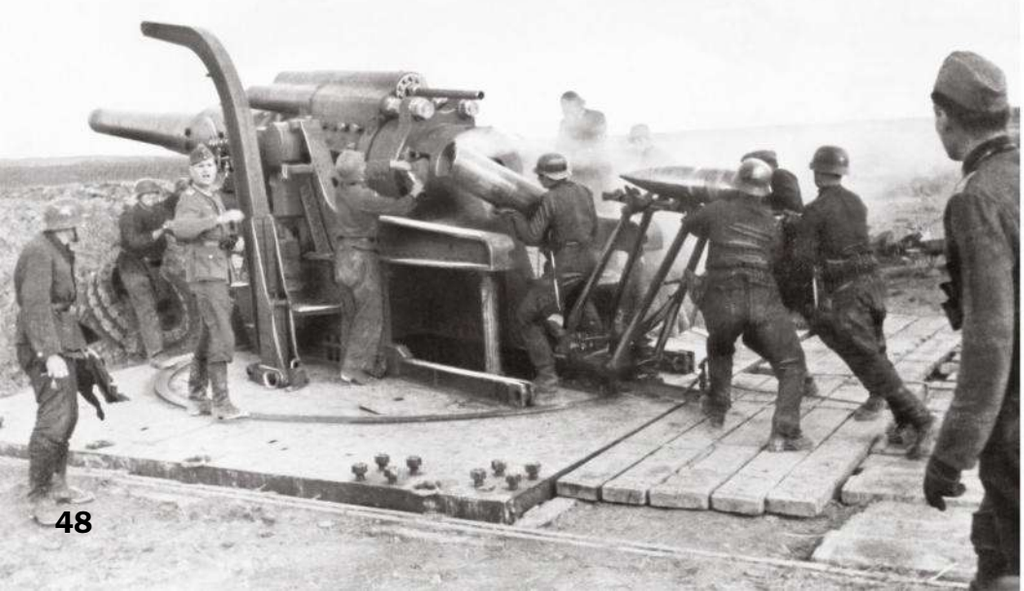
One of the remarkable aspects of the German attack in the north is that plans for precisely how to deal with Leningrad continued to evolve even after the invasion had commenced. By the time the siege began on 8 September, Hitler's intention was to secure a tight perimeter and to allow hunger and the coming winter to destroy those trapped within Leningrad. Hunger has been a weapon of siege warfare since time immemorial, but almost always with the intention of rendering the garrison unable to fight so that the besieging forces can attack successfully or force a surrender. This was a very different type of siege. Orders were issued that if the Soviet authorities in Leningrad attempted to surrender, the Germans were to reject it. Hunger was used deliberately as a means of extermination, as evidenced by detailed discussions in Germany with nutritionists to calculate how long it would take to starve the city to death.

"MORE SOVIET CITIZENS, MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, DIED IN LENINGRAD AND IN THE ATTEMPTS TO LIFT THE SIEGE THAN BRITISH EMPIRE WAR DEAD FROM BOTH WORLD WARS COMBINED"

The result was a winter of almost inconceivable horror. Tens of thousands of civilians perished in the city through a mixture of malnutrition, exposure and German bombardment. Soviet engineers established the 'Road of Life' across the frozen Lake Ladoga and managed to bring in barely sufficient food to prevent complete collapse, but even as the winter turned to spring in 1942 and ration allowances edged upwards, they were still insufficient to sustain weight, let alone to restore it. The Blokadniki, those who endured that terrible winter, would be weakened by their ordeal for many months more.

Throughout the siege, the Red Army made repeated attempts to break the siege ring. The cost was huge. More Soviet citizens, military and civilian, died in Leningrad and in the attempts to lift the siege than British Empire war dead from both World Wars combined. The endurance of the people of Leningrad became one of the great stories of the war, both in the Soviet Union and across the entire world.

***Below:** German artillery bombarded Leningrad for months, causing huge numbers of casualties*



***Above:** Two civilians pick over a dead horse for meat in the winter of 1941-2*

But like so many great stories, the tale of the Siege of Leningrad is often distorted. German accounts often highlight the failure to overrun the city in late 1941, when the Red Army was at its weakest and German forces were still moving forward. One more effort, many officers and men later wrote, would have given the German armies their prize. But few if any of these German accounts consider the consequences of advancing into the city. By the end of 1941, German infantry units across the entire Eastern Front were far below full strength. It is questionable whether the units that closed in on Leningrad would have had sufficient strength to conduct the sort of brutal house-to-house fighting that was such a feature of the battle for Stalingrad in 1942. Nor do any of the German accounts consider what would have happened to the city's residents, who would either have been driven away into the swamps and forests of northern Russia or – if they were identified as Jews, communists or other 'undesireables' – shot immediately.

Soviet accounts of the siege are also distorted. Post-war orthodox Soviet historiography portrayed the great victory over Nazism as being due to the strength of the communist system, led by the infallible Stalin. To acknowledge the worst moments of the siege would have undermined this narrative; some aspects, such as outbreaks of cannibalism, were taboo subjects until the end of the Soviet Union. The great endurance of Leningrad was of course acknowledged, but only as part of the overall Soviet triumph.

Those who live in the city created by Peter the Great as a 'window on the west' have always regarded themselves as different from the rest of Russia. Indeed, this sense of difference accounts for much of Stalin's distrust of Leningrad. But the unique horror and tragedy of the siege, and the superhuman endurance required to survive it, marked both Leningrad and its people, reinforcing their sense of being different, despite every attempt by Stalin and others to play down any such uniqueness. Writing about the siege that she and others endured, the poet Olga Berggolts summed up the reasons they had prevailed: she concluded her poem with the words "We are Leningraders". For those who lived in the city, both at the time and after, no other explanation was required.

German soldiers in a burning village on the outskirts of Leningrad

THE SIEGE IN NUMBERS

872 DAYS

The siege began on 8 September 1941 and wasn't lifted until 27 January 1944

630,000

Civilians starved to death during the siege, with thousands more killed from artillery bombardment

1.7 MILLION

Civilians were evacuated from the city, including over 400,000 children. This was around one-third of the city's original population

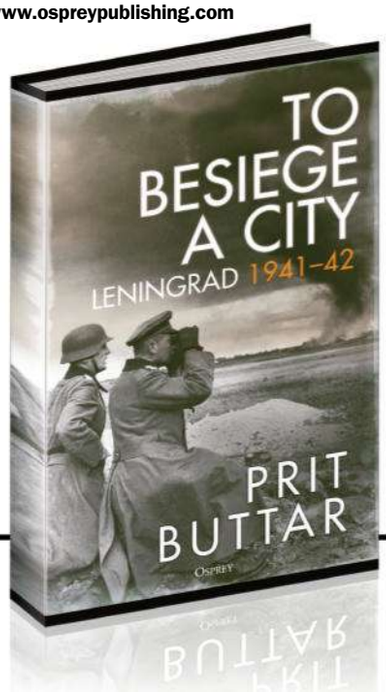
2,000

People were reportedly arrested by the NKVD for cannibalism

TO BESIEGE A CITY

In the first major study in over a decade, Prit Buttar chronicles the long and horrific Siege of Leningrad, investigating and unravelling many of the propaganda threads on both sides that still endure. A widely respected expert on the Eastern Front, Buttar is also the author of *Battleground Prussia: The Assault on Germany's Eastern Front 1944-45* and his most recent publication was *Meat Grinder: The Battles for the Rzhev Salient, 1942-43* (Osprey, 2022).

***To Besiege a City* is the first of a two-part volume, available now from Osprey Publishing. www.ospreypublishing.com**



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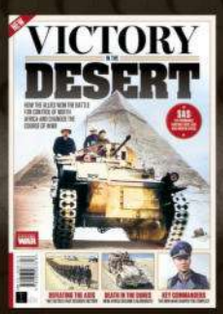

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WHAT IF...

NAPOLEON HAD WON THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO?

It's one of history's great hypotheticals, but would a French victory at Waterloo really have changed the course of history? We asked a pair of experts to give their takes

What would have happened if Napoleon had won the Battle of Waterloo?

Alan Forrest: He would certainly have taken Brussels and he might have tried to advance toward the boundary of the Rhine and Schelt. But there was no possibility of long-term success. He would surely have gone on to lose within weeks or months, because although the British, Dutch, Belgians and Prussians were involved at Waterloo, neither the Austrians nor the Russians were, and they had armies of 150,000 to 200,000 waiting in the wings. In particular, the Tsar wanted Napoleon destroyed: he didn't believe Europe could remain at peace if Napoleon remained at large.

Mark Adkin: I wouldn't have thought [that Napoleon would have enjoyed success for] more than a few weeks. If he had won the battle, Wellington would have withdrawn what was left of his army and Napoleon would have had to hurry back to Paris. The Allies would have waited until the Austrians and Russians had arrived and the British and Prussians had recovered, then would have teamed up together. Napoleon wouldn't have had much chance at all.

Why did Napoleon lose at Waterloo?

Adkin: Napoleon had a big problem because he was surrounded by various countries that were desperate to get rid of him. There were four main threats once he established himself back in Paris: The Anglo-Dutch Army under Wellington in Belgium, the Prussians under Blücher in Germany, the Russians under Barclay De Tolly, and the Austrians under Schwarzenberg. That's nearly half million men under arms and they all planned to converge on Paris. The only way he could possibly win was to make the maximum use of the time it was going to take Russians and the Austrians and so on to get there. While they were marching, he had to deal with the others, in particular Wellington and Blücher. He wanted to defeat the Prussians at Ligny, while Wellington was held off by a smaller force. Once the Prussians were defeated, he could turn the combined strength on Wellington. He succeeded partially at Ligny – his strategy worked and he split the two Allies, turned on the Prussians and defeated them, but he didn't crush them. He let them withdraw and recover. That was a mistake. Napoleon allowed them to withdraw north instead of east, and by withdrawing north they were able to turn and then rejoin Wellington's forces.

Forrest: Napoleon had no possibility of finding large numbers of additional soldiers because he was now reliant on the French population alone, and while he was on Elba, France had abolished conscription. As long as the Allies could unite their forces against him, he was hopelessly outnumbered, and his failure to drive home his advantage after Ligny proved to be a fatal mistake.

MARK ADKIN

Mark Adkin is a military historian who took up writing after serving in the British Army for 18 years and over ten years working in the Colonial Service in the Pacific. He is the author of *The Waterloo Companion: The Complete Guide To World's Most Famous Land Battle*, and has more recently written *The Western Front Companion*. He also wrote The Sharpe Companion, which placed Bernard Cornwell's Sharpe novels in historical content.

ALAN FORREST

Alan Forrest is emeritus professor of modern history at the University of York. He has written widely on French revolutionary and Napoleonic history. His books include *Napoleon's Men: The Soldiers Of The Revolution And Empire*, and a biography simply called *Napoleon*. He has also authored a book on the Battle of Waterloo for Oxford University Publishing's Great Battles series, released for the battle's bicentenary in 2015.

So if Napoleon had stopped the Prussians at Ligny, he would have defeated the British at Waterloo?

Adkin: Wellington knew the Prussians were coming; he had been promised that they were coming, which is the actual reason why he stood at Waterloo and defended that bridge. If he knew the Prussians were not coming, then he would probably have withdrawn until he could join the Prussians and therefore the battle would not have taken place, not there anyway. So the crucial thing is the Prussians and their arrival clinched it [the battle].

Did the French support Napoleon's return from Elba?

Forrest: The most important thing to remember is that the French people were war-weary in 1815; they wanted peace above all else and few believed Napoleon could deliver that. On the other hand, there was no enthusiasm for the Bourbons and certainly no desire to go back to the Ancién Regime. The fear was that the Bourbons would try to restore the kind of aristocratic and clerical authority that had existed previously. Napoleon had surrounded himself with luxury and riches at the height of the empire, but when he returned from Elba in 1815 he sought to present himself as the little corporal of the army who had risen through talent to be its commander, but who remained essentially a man of the people, true to the ideals of the Revolution of 1789. This proved a clever tactic.

Adkin: Most of the old soldiers were tremendously loyal to Napoleon. Napoleon had raised the standing of the ordinary French soldier during all those campaigns. He was extremely generous and gave them good pay. When he came back from Elba, I think thousands of these men, who had been thrown out of the army by the Bourbons coming back, had nothing and were no longer the number-one citizens like they used to be, so they rejoined Napoleon in their thousands.

If he promised to abandon his imperial ambitions, could Napoleon have negotiated to stay in power in France rather than the Allies restoring the Bourbons again?

Adkin: He tried to at the beginning, after escaping from Elba. He tried then to convince the European powers he wanted to avoid war and that he renounced all claims to Belgium, Holland, Germany and Poland. He was unsuccessful, of course.

"THE FRENCH PEOPLE WERE WAR-WEARY IN 1815; THEY WANTED PEACE ABOVE ALL ELSE AND FEW BELIEVED NAPOLEON COULD DELIVER THAT"

Even if Napoleon had won at Waterloo it is likely Paris would have been taken and the great general would have been executed

"THE ALLIES HAD TO DEAL WITH NAPOLEON A LITTLE DELICATELY IN 1815, BECAUSE THERE WAS A REAL DANGER THAT THEY WOULD CREATE A MARTYR"

Forrest: This was never realistic. Russia wouldn't allow it and I'm not sure that Britain would, either. Britain did, however, want France to remain a viable European power since it was an important part of the balance of power structure on which peace depended. Britain was aware of the possibility of a rampant nationalistic Prussia and was very aware of the threat posed by Russia, especially in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. Britain particularly needed to maintain lines of communication with India. Remember that Britain was an emerging global power in 1815 and that the Russians were aware of that. So they needed to protect France's position, but that also meant that they had to be sure France would be a responsible member of the international community. For that reason they had to get rid of Napoleon. It didn't really matter who else was there, the Bourbons would do, but they were sure that they did not want Napoleon to play that role.

If they wouldn't accept him as a ruler of France, would the Allies still have gone down the route of exiling Napoleon to St Helena, potentially running the risk him escaping again?

Forrest: Napoleon himself was much more terrified after Waterloo of falling into the hands of the Bourbons, who might have done just that. He chose to surrender to the English in the hope that he would be allowed to live as a prisoner under house arrest in England; in other words, the British would treat him decently, with a modicum of respect. As we know, the British rejected that option and exiled him to St Helena, a remote island in the South Atlantic, far removed from Europe, from which there was little possibility he could escape. In France he could have faced a trial for treason and possible execution, as happened with Michel Ney and others of Napoleon's loyal lieutenants. But that course was not without its dangers. The regime would have risked turning Napoleon into a political martyr and, given the devotion in which he was held by his followers, it surely would have got one. I think you could make the point that the Allies had to deal with Napoleon a little delicately in 1815, because there was a real danger that they would create a martyr, in the process dividing French opinion and risking lasting instability.

If France did destabilise and wasn't able to balance power in Europe, how would this change history?

Forrest: Britain becomes the dominant world power of the 19th century, which is what did happen anyway. The next challenge, except for the colonial wars in China and so on, is going to be the Crimean War, which essentially means that the balance of power that was established along with events in 1815 more or less holds.

THE ARMIES AT WATERLOO

FRENCH	BRITISH	PRUSSIAN
COMMANDER	COMMANDER	COMMANDER
Napoleon Bonaparte	Duke of Wellington	Field Marshall Von Blücher
TROOPS	TROOPS	TROOPS
C.58,000	C.57,000	49,000
GUNS	GUNS	GUNS
246	156	134
CAVALRY	CAVALRY	CAVALRY
14,000	11,000	19,800

***Right:** Napoleon was exiled to the Italian island of Elba but returned to Paris and declared himself emperor*

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Art

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

1813

Battle of Leipzig
Napoleon is decisively beaten in battle for the first time, by a coalition including troops from Russia, Prussia, Austria and Sweden. He is forced to return to France but the coalition continues to pursue him.
16 October 1813

Napoleon abdicates
After being defeated by the Allies of the Sixth Coalition, Napoleon is exiled to the island of Elba. The pre-revolutionary Bourbon monarchy is restored and Louis XVIII becomes King of France.
11 April 1814

Beginning of Napoleon's Hundred Days
Napoleon escapes Elba and after landing on the French mainland convinces the regiment sent to incept him to join him and march on Paris. As he moves north, more soldiers defect to join him. King Louis XVIII flees to the Netherlands.
26 February 1815

Congress of Vienna
Representatives of Austria, Britain, France, Russia, and Prussia declare Napoleon an 'outlaw', marking the beginning of the War of the Seventh Coalition.
13 March 1815

The Waterloo Campaign
Napoleon battles the Prussians at Ligny as marshal Michel Ney and Wellington fight the inconclusive Battle of Quatre Bras. The battle with the Prussians was vital as if Napoleon won he could concentrate on the British.
16-18 June 1815

REAL TIMELINE

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

Napoleon defeats Wellington
After defeating the Prussians, Napoleon waits for the battleground to dry before manoeuvring artillery and cavalry to attack the Anglo-Army at Waterloo. Facing substantial loss of life, Wellington retreats to the British garrison in Brussels.
18-19 June 1815

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Wellington defeats Napoleon
Napoleon attempts to wipe out Wellington's centre troops with attacks before the Prussians arrive. However, he engages too late after waiting for the ground to dry and Blücher arrives. Napoleon retreats.
19 June 1815

Paris turns on Napoleon
Napoleon returns to the capital in defeat three days after Waterloo to find the public no longer support national resistance. While his brother Lucien believes he can still seize power by dissolving the parliament, Napoleon senses the change and abdicates his throne in favour of his son.
22 June 1815

Napoleon sent to St Helena
Napoleon is banished to the remote island of St Helena without any of the perks he enjoyed on Elba. He dies of natural causes in 1821.
23 October 1815

Michel Ney executed
Napoleon's long-time ally and marshal at the Battle of Waterloo, Michel Ney is executed as a warning to Napoleon's supporters.
7 December 1815

Austro-Russian invasion
The Austrian and Russian armies combined siege of Paris overwhelms the French, with Barclay de Tolly drawing on his experiences of capturing the city in 1814.
July 1815

Hundred Days ends
After the president of the provisional government intimates he should leave Paris, Napoleon exits the capital. Soon after Graf von Zieten's Prussian I Corps enters Paris and defeat the French. Louis XIII is restored.
8 July 1815

Napoleon surrenders
After the British Navy blocks his attempt to take a ship to America, Napoleon surrenders himself to Captain Frederick Maitland of HMS Bellerophon and is transported to England.
15 July 1815

Emperor again
Returning triumphant to Paris Napoleon is unopposed as he dissolves parliament and assumes dictatorial powers to better defend Paris from attack.
21 June 1815

Napoleon executed
After his surrender the Allies allow Louis XVIII to execute Napoleon as they believe he is a threat to Europe's peace. However, the move divides France and Napoleon becomes a martyr.
July 1815

The Bonaparte Spring
Bonapartists inspired by Napoleon's promises of constitutional reform during his Hundred Days are outraged at his execution and protest against Bourbon rule in Paris.
15 July 1815

Outbreak of civil war
Disillusioned Napoleonic generals and officials seize on pro-Bonaparte feeling amongst the masses to make a grab for power. Events escalate and civil war erupts across France.
September 1815

Rise of the British Empire
Britain seizes abandoned French colonies and with a self-destructing France unable to balance European power, the Crimean War between Britain and Russia is possibly hastened.
Mid-19th century

Heroes of the Victoria Cross

FREDERICK TILSTON

In March 1945, during an attack on the Hochwald Forest in Germany, this Canadian officer performed numerous acts of bravery to earn the Commonwealth's highest military honour

WORDS **ALEX BOWERS**

Acting Major Frederick Tilston crashed onto the sodden soil in front of the Hochwald Forest. Shrapnel had torn a four-inch gash through his hip, the 38-year-old officer's second injury in almost as many minutes after sustaining a nasty-looking ear wound. Blood trickled down his neck and from the hole in his leg, while all around him the First Canadian Army's Essex Scottish Regiment continued fighting. It was 1 March 1945, and amid an Allied push to neutralise the last formidable German bastion on the west side of the Rhine River, Tilston had just entered his first and last day of combat.

Nevertheless, it had been far from an easy ride up until that point. Born in 1906, the Toronto native had spent a stint in Chicago before his father died in a car accident. He, his mother and two sisters had then moved back home, where the family struggled to make ends meet. Tilston ultimately put aside his dream of becoming a doctor and instead qualified as a pharmacist. After a period of being a Sterling Drugs sales representative, the mild-mannered and affable Canadian enlisted in the army in 1940. His age and managerial experience saw him rise through the Essex Scottish ranks to officer status, but he was mercifully not involved in the disastrous August 1942 Dieppe Raid in which his unit participated.

Later that same year, however, he took a bullet to the back during a live-firing training accident. Upon his recovery, Tilston learned that he had been transferred to an administrative role, much to his bitter disappointment and despite his best efforts to reverse the decision. But the unwelcome change did little to keep him out of harm's way, as he discovered in Normandy when his jeep struck a mine. Among his injuries, shrapnel had penetrated Tilston's right eye,

***Above:** Canadian soldiers pose beside their Bren carrier in May 1945*

a wound that sent him to hospital yet again and would, much further down the line, require the entire eye's removal.

By February 1945, with the casualty-stricken First Canadian Army clawing its way into Nazi Germany, Tilston had got his wish of becoming 'C' Company's acting major. The Essex Scottish had been tasked with clearing the northern half of the Hochwald Forest, a dense and sizable coniferous woodland that stood between the Allies and the German town of Xanten. From there, enemy forces could protect their escape route, the Wesel bridge across the Rhine. The plan was for 'C' Company to advance on the left and Major Paul Cropp's 'D' Company to attack on the right. Unfortunately, confronted with inclement weather, Tilston's command would receive no tank support due to the saturation of the roughly 500-yards of open ground ahead of the forest. To make matters worse, the assault was delayed from the half-light of 0715 hours to the full brightness of morning when the artillery barrage commenced. Tilston pushed through a hedgerow with the 100-strong 'C' Company, two-thirds of which comprised green reinforcements, and into the sights of the German defenders waiting in the field and beyond.

The acting major led from the front with his two forward platoons, machine gun and mortar fire already tearing into the hard-

Frederick Tilston at Buckingham Palace during the ceremony where King George VI awarded him the Victoria Cross

"BLOOD TRICKLED DOWN HIS NECK AND FROM THE HOLE IN HIS LEG, WHILE ALL AROUND HIM THE FIRST CANADIAN ARMY'S ESSEX SCOTTISH REGIMENT CONTINUED FIGHTING"

pressed Canadian troops. Disregarding the first injury to his ear, Tilston charged ahead and promptly overcame a 10ft-wide (3m) barbed-wire barrier, shouting encouragement and pouring Sten gun rounds into the enemy as he found a path through the obstacle. He then noticed Lieutenant Charlie Gatton's platoon on the left had been pinned down by a German position. Tilston clasped at a couple of hand grenades, tossed them at the assailants and silenced the emplacement in an instant. Instructing the third reserve platoon to mop up the initial defensive line, the remaining attacking party ploughed on toward the woods. It was now, as he approached the edge of Hochwald Forest, that Tilston's second wound of the day stopped him in his tracks.

Watching his men overwhelm the next line of German paratroopers, the Canadian officer struggled to his feet. His command would not end there, he determined, and so, catching up with 'C' Company, he organised the reduced band in preparation for the inevitable enemy counterattack. "He had no regard for enemy fire," remarked Gatton. "He must have been beyond caring, I suppose, because he never got down in the trench. He just stood on the trench or squatted on the trench and just discussed our problems as if he was in a board meeting. He was absolutely cool."

Above: Start line from where Maj. F.A. Tilston led the Essex Scottish Regiment for the attack

With ammunition running dangerously low, Tilston turned his attention to reaching 'D' Company, which had had an easier advance, in the hope of retrieving spare supplies. However, between the two companies was a 100-yard gap across a road in clear view of the Germans. Undeterred, Tilston ran the gauntlet before checking in with his 'D' Company counterpart Cropp, who remembered: "And then he sauntered [over], more or less, and said: 'We're short of ammunition. What can we have?' We then supplied him with ammunition. He was, of course, bleeding from a number of minor wounds, and we patched those up for him and sent him back… The thing that struck me about Fred was this man is really enjoying the war. Here I am terrified by what's going on most of the time, and here's a man whose totally enjoying what's happening."

Tilston made not one, not two, but at least six journeys for additional supplies. During these forays, 'B' Company passed through 'C' Company's lines into the woods, whereupon Fred spotted Captain Alf Hodges. When Hodges passed by, the acting major called out to him: "Keep going, Alf. All they've got is rifles and machine guns."

Nevertheless, it was on Tilston's final trip that his luck ran out. Dodging into a large shell hole en route, a mortar or artillery round tore away one of his legs and mangled the other. The downed leader expended what little energy he had left to remove his webbing and inject himself with morphine, all the while drifting in and out of consciousness. Stretcher-bearers eventually discovered Tilston's whereabouts, carried him over the bullet-strewn ground and mounted him on

A column of Canadian Staghound armoured cars waits to cross the Rhine River near Xanten, 10 March 1945

Images: Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

an ambulance jeep for evacuation. It is said that he had at first refused medical attention until he was confident that his troops, as well as the newly ordained officer in command, could maintain the position.

His single day of combat was over, but his exploits had played a vital role in securing a foothold within the Hochwald Forest. The Essex Scottish had made considerable gains, albeit at the cost of 31 dead and 77 wounded. Tilston was among the latter group, surviving his injuries but losing both his legs below the knee. Few were surprised when he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his efforts, his citation reading in part: "… this officer by personal contact, unshakeable confidence and unquenchable enthusiasm so inspired his men that they held firm against great odds".

A temporarily wheelchair-bound Tilston received his VC from King George VI at Buckingham Palace prior to his return to Canada. Once back in Toronto, he learned to walk on artificial legs at Sunnybrook Military Hospital. It was during his convalescence here that he went out on the town with fellow Canadian VC recipients John Mahony and Paul Triquet. Not returning until the early morning hours, the three highly respected veterans found themselves in trouble with the staff for singing at the top of their lungs. Triquet's defence was as good a reason as any, noting that "we had something to celebrate. We'd gone to a nightclub and Fred had had his first post-war dance."

***Above:** In later life Tilston championed the cause of veterans, especially amputees*

Tilston took up his old civilian position exactly one year after his heroics in the Hochwald Forest. The loss of his legs and the ultimate loss of his right eye – previously damaged in France – did not prevent him from leading a full life. Having started a family, he became president and then chairman of the board of Sterling Drugs, until retiring in 1971. He also became honorary colonel of his former unit – renamed the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment – and continued to champion the cause of veterans, especially amputees, all while never letting his own disability get the better of him. He passed away on 23 September 1992, aged 86. He was buried in Toronto's Mount Hope Cemetery, and his Victoria Cross was donated to the Royal Canadian Military Institute.

Asked what quality was most important in earning the Victoria Cross, Tilston had once quipped with his characteristic smile: "Inexperience!" Yet it was his inspired leadership and courage that became intertwined with his legacy, recognised at the Royal Canadian Legion in Aurora, Ontario – named the Fred Tilston, VC branch in his honour. Remarking on the power of his story today, Canadian military historian Brad St Croix said exclusively to *History of War*: "Tilston demonstrated immense strength of spirit during the attack on the Hochwald Forest against fanatical enemy resistance. His self-sacrifice allowed his men to overcome many hurdles – both physical and mental. We're left in awe of his remarkable achievements both on and off the battlefield."

"TILSTON'S LUCK FINALLY RAN OUT: AS HE DODGED INTO A LARGE SHELL HOLE, A MORTAR OR ARTILLERY ROUND TORE AWAY ONE OF HIS LEGS AND MANGLED THE OTHER"

NEXT-GEN BATTLESHIPS

While Britain's navy ruled the waves in centuries past, the future battles above and below the surface call for cutting-edge capabilities

© Wiki / PD / LAPhot/ Nick Cruisham/ MOD

If you thought that the golden age of naval combat came to an end 200 years ago, then clearly somebody forgot to tell the national navies of today, as scores of state-of-the-art, armed-to-the-teeth battleships are currently emerging from shipbuilding yards with a singular aim in mind: total domination of the world's seas.

From the formidable Type 45 destroyers being pushed out of British dockyards, through to the almost sci-fi Zumwalt-class battleships emerging in the US, and on to the cruising carrier vessels sitting like small islands in the world's oceans, battleships are being produced en masse and to a more advanced spec than ever before.

Far from the basic heavyweights of bygone centuries, required simply to go toe-to-toe with each other in a deadly game of broadsides, today's warships need to take down a variety of threats, whether at sea, on land or in the air, and they need to do so at extreme range. As such, step onto a battleship today – be it a frigate, destroyer or corvette – and you'll find an arsenal of incredible weapons systems.

There are cannons that can fire over distances of 60 miles (95km) and deliver a guided smart munition to a target with pinpoint accuracy, as well as Gatling guns that can automatically track a target moving at hundreds of miles per hour and then fire explosive bullets at up to 3,600ft (1,100m) per second to take it down.

Modern missile launch systems are capable of launching a wide variety of city block-levelling missiles directly into the heart of enemy encampments in minutes from a safe distance, while naval guns are now built to subject a target to continuous bombardment with high-explosive shells. All this is but a taste of the weaponry being fitted to the most advanced 21st-century warships.

The heavy armament of vessels currently knows no bounds, with even coastguard fleets, convoy vehicles and civilian support ships being outfitted with some form of military-grade offensive weaponry.

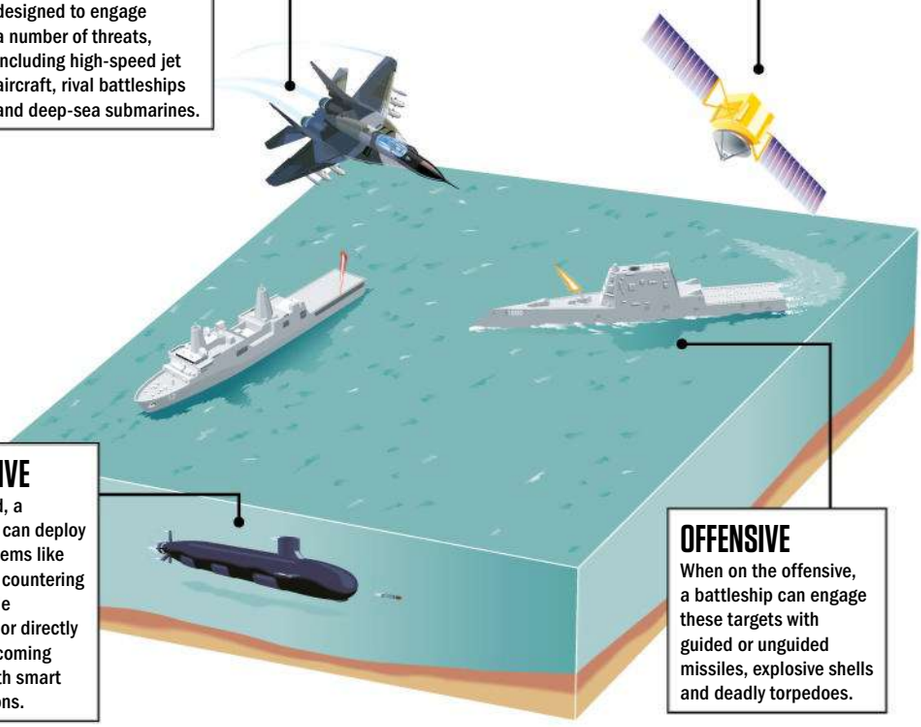
Clearly, controlling the world's waters is not as old-fashioned a priority as the history books would have us believe. In this feature we take a look at the various types of battleship taking to the seas and the weapon systems that are revolutionising not just naval combat but warfare in general.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The key stages and technology that decide the outcome of a modern naval battle

THREATS
Modern battleships are designed to engage a number of threats, including high-speed jet aircraft, rival battleships and deep-sea submarines.

DETECTION
To engage any of these targets first they need to be detected – something achieved via orbiting GPS satellites, radar and sonar communication systems.



DEFENSIVE
If attacked, a battleship can deploy decoy systems like flares and countering anti-missile munitions or directly engage incoming threats with smart autocannons.

OFFENSIVE
When on the offensive, a battleship can engage these targets with guided or unguided missiles, explosive shells and deadly torpedoes.

***Above:** A high-explosive guided torpedo is fired from a US battleship*

***Above:** More traditional naval guns on board the USS North Carolina*

USS Iowa unleashes a volley of explosive shells from its Mark 7 naval guns

BATTLESHIP TYPES

01 CORVETTE
One of the smallest types, the corvette is a lightly armed and manoeuvrable vessel used for coastal operations. Stealth corvettes are now becoming popular too.

02 FRIGATE
Lightly armed, medium-sized ships generally used to protect other military or civilian vessels. Recently, frigates have been re-focused to take out submarines.

03 DESTROYER
Large and heavily armed, destroyers are typically outfitted for anti-submarine, anti-aircraft and anti-surface warfare and can remain at sea for months on end.

04 CRUISER
The cruiser is an armed-to-the-teeth multi-role vessel akin to a modern destroyer. While cruisers are still in use, they have largely been superseded now.

05 CARRIER
These vast ships act as an air base at sea. Advances in hull design, composite materials and integrated systems this century will serve to increase their importance.

"THE CRUISER IS AN ARMED-TO-THE-TEETH MULTI-ROLE VESSEL AKIN TO A MODERN-DAY DESTROYER"

A DIAMOND DESTROYER

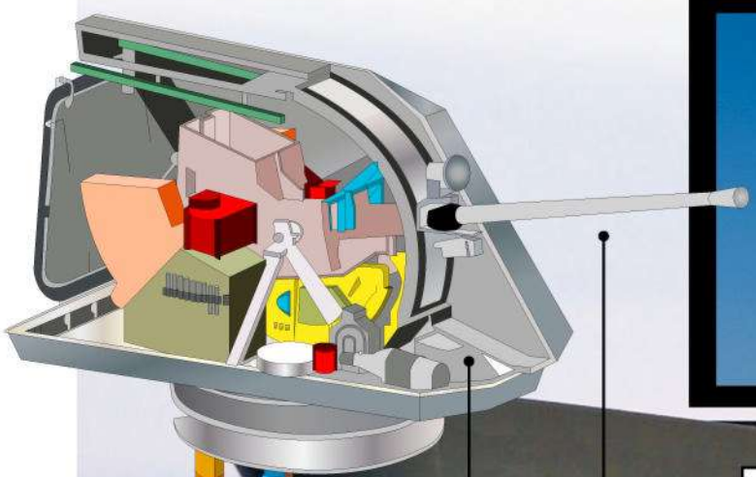
HMS Diamond is one the Royal Navy's latest Type 45 destroyers, fitted with a huge range of defensive systems to counter surface and submerged threats

MK 110 NAVAL GUN

Capable of delivering automatic salvos of 220 57mm Mk 295 Mod 0 ammunition (fragmenting high-explosive shells) each and every minute, the Mk 110 naval gun is quite simply a shell-slinging colossus. Stemming from one of the most long-lasting naval gun series of the last 100 years, the Mk 110 comes with a selection of hot features. These include the ability to fire both standard and smart munitions, a gun barrel-mounted radar for refined measuring of muzzle velocity, an instantaneous ability to switch between ammunition types and a stealth-oriented ballistic shield that protects the gun while allowing a full 360-degree traverse. There's also a fully digital fire-control system that enables the Mk 110 to respond to exact targeting orders, and ammunition fuse selection milliseconds prior to firing. The only thing that stops the Mk 110 from bombarding its target continuously is its shell capacity, which rests at 120 rounds with a three-minute reload process.

ADVANCED GUN SYSTEM

The Advanced Gun System (AGS) is a new naval gun from BAE Systems capable of firing precision munitions at super-fast speeds and at over-the-horizon ranges. What makes it special is that far from firing traditional unguided shells – as most naval guns have been designed for – it fires the Long Range Land Attack Projectile (LRLAP), a 155mm precision-guided artillery shell that, thanks to base bleed rocket assistance and an extended range fin glide trajectory, can travel over 65 miles (105km) to a target. What's more, it then has a 'circular error probable' (accuracy) of only 165ft (50m), making it incredibly precise even at great distance. Throw in the fact that the AGS can fire ten of these LRLAPs per minute from its stealth-designed turret, and that it can also fire traditional unguided munitions, it's clear why it's being incorporated into many warships.



BARREL

The MK 110 has a single firing barrel with a progressive, 24-groove parabolic twist. The barrel's bore length is 3,990mm, with the gun capable of firing 57mm conventional and smart munitions.

TURRET

The MK 110's turret is capable of a full-circle sweep and contains the gun's firing systems. The turret allows the gun to elevate from -10° through to +77° and is protected with a ballistic shield to disguise it from radars.

HOIST

The MK 110's 57mm Mk 295 Mod 0 ammunition is delivered to the turret emplacement via a mechanical loading hoist. Ammunition is stacked 120 rounds deep and automatically fed into the firing chamber.

HISTORY OF WAR BOOK OF NAVAL WARFARE IS ON SALE NOW

VERTICAL LAUNCH SYSTEM

The Vertical Launch System (VLS) is a state-of-the-art multi-missile launching system. Unlike previous systems, which could only fire one specific type of missile, the VLS is modular, so a variety of projectiles can be fired from the same enclosures. The missiles, which on the Zumwalt-class destroyers include the RIM-162 Evolved Seasparrow missile, Anti-Submarine Rocket (ASROC) and Tactical Tomahawk subsonic cruise missile, are enclosed in a series of launch cells within the ship's hull and, when launched, are fired out of the top of the deck. By concealing the missiles within the ship until needed, the VLS improves the ship's overall radar cross-section, making it much harder to detect. Each missile fired from a VLS cell is of the guided variety, with a selection of high-explosive warheads directed to the target by radar or GPS.

RADAR

A bulbous, tubular radome encases the Phalanx's Ku-band search and gun-laying radar. The search antenna sweeps for threats, and once a target is confirmed as hostile, the gun-laying antenna locks on.

PHALANX CIWS

Every battleship built today comes with a close-in weapon system, or CIWS, and out of these systems the Phalanx CIWS is the leader of the pack. It is a point-defence weapon designed to attack any target – be that enemy fighter jets or missiles – which has managed to evade the battleship's longer-range offensive weapons with its massive 20mm M61 Vulcan Gatling gun. What makes it really special though is its advanced targeting system, which consists of two independent antennas that work together to engage a target. The first antenna is used for searching for the incoming target and delivers bearing, velocity, range and altitude information. The second antenna is then used to track the target on its approach until it is in firing range. As soon as an incoming target is close enough, the Phalanx can then automatically fire, using a selection of sensors to guide rounds at the unfortunate target in a split second.

DRUM

Ammunition for the Gatling cannon comes courtesy of a large magazine drum. This dispenser can feed the cannon at a rate of over 4,000 rounds per minute.

GUN

Damage is dealt with a 20mm M61 Vulcan autocannon. The cannon has a muzzle velocity of over 1,100m/s and an effective range of up to 3.6km.

KA-52 ALLIGATOR

This two-seat attack helicopter, known to NATO as Hokum B, is a modernised version of its Cold War predecessor

WORDS **MICHAEL E HASKEW**

RADAR SYSTEM
A mast-mounted radome houses a Phazatron FH-01 Millimeter Wave Radar system. Its distinctively widened nose accommodates the system, and two antennae provide aerial and ground target acquisition.

TWIN-SEAT COCKPIT
The twin-seat cockpit is equipped with heads-up display, image intensifiers, GPS receiver and four SMD 66 multifunction displays. An added safety feature is the K-37-800M ejection seat for both pilots.

Well over a decade after the Ka-50 Black Shark single-seat attack helicopter, designated Hokum A by NATO, was introduced with the Russian armed forces, the opportunity to improve the type was seized with the development of a two-seat version, the Ka-52 Alligator. This retained many of the characteristics of the original weapon system but also brought enhancements with it. Designed for tactical ground support and as a primary airborne killer of enemy armoured vehicles, including tanks, fighting vehicles and personnel carriers, the Ka-52 is known to NATO as the Hokum B. Intended to operate in extreme weather conditions, its suite of electronics, offensive and defensive weapons and surveillance equipment, and specific avionics combine to provide the most up-to-date combat platform of the type in the Russian military arsenal.

The Ka-52 flew for the first time in the mid-1990s, but production of the Alligator was slow to develop. However, the attack helicopter has proven adaptable and versatile in its multiple

ARMAMENT DIVERSITY
Along with the 2A42 automatic gun, six hard points are fitted with a combination of the 9M120 Ataka and VIKHR anti-tank guided missiles and B8V20 rocket launchers for unguided S-8 or S-13 rockets. The IGLA-V guided missile provides anti-aircraft defence.

Its distinctive design presents a compact silhouette

KA-52 ALLIGATOR ATTACK HELICOPTER

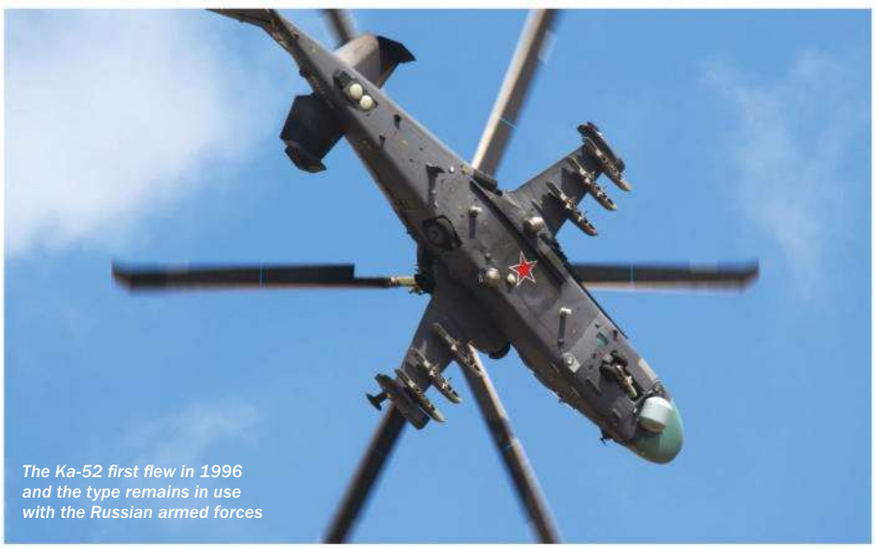
COMMISSIONED	2011
ORIGIN	RUSSIA
LENGTH	52.5FT (16M)
RANGE	286 MILES (460KM)
ENGINE	2X KLIMOV VK-2500 TURBOSHAFT
CREW	2
PRIMARY WEAPON	12X VIKHR ANTI-TANK MISSILES; ATAKA LASER-GUIDED MISSILES; S-8 OR S-13 ROCKETS
SECONDARY WEAPON	1X SHIPUNOV 2A42 30MM AUTOCANNON IN NPPU-80 MOUNT

ROTOR SYSTEM

The Kamov contra-rotating system of rotors improves handling and manoeuvrability, and eliminates the requirement for a tail rotor system.

"ITS ROLE REMAINS CRITICAL IN THE ONGOING CONFLICT IN UKRAINE"

roles. Not only has it demonstrated the tank-killer attribute that is primary in combat, but the Ka-52 has also proven adept at delivering a variety of ordnance as battlefield conditions dictate. Its all-weather combat and surveillance capabilities have become invaluable to Russian forces engaged in the civil war in Syria and currently in the war in Ukraine. Its role remains critical in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine as the Russian army faces new and technologically advanced NATO tanks such as the German Leopard and US Abrams series, and sophisticated Western defence systems.



The Ka-52 first flew in 1996 and the type remains in use with the Russian armed forces

Illustration: Nicholas Forder

The Ka-52 is designed for tactical ground support and the destruction of enemy armoured vehicles

ARMAMENT

In its primary role destroying tanks and armoured vehicles, the Ka-52 carries a variety of ordnance. Six hardpoints are available to mount the laser-guided Vikhr anti-tank missile with a range of five miles (8km), the 9M120 Ataka laser-guided anti-tank missile with a range of 3.7 miles (6km), or S-8 or S-13 rocket pods. The rockets are used against tanks and hardened aircraft shelters and runways respectively. A single 30mm 2A42 autocannon is mounted in the centre fuselage with 460 rounds. The select-fire autocannon is effective against light armoured vehicles or other traffic, as well as troop concentrations. The pilot chooses the type of autocannon round to be fired while in flight.

"THE SELECT-FIRE AUTOCANNON IS EFFECTIVE AGAINST LIGHT ARMOURED VEHICLES OR OTHER TRAFFIC, AS WELL AS TROOP CONCENTRATIONS"

The aircraft's formidable array of ordnance is also effective against hardened aircraft shelters and runways

DESIGN

The original design of the Ka-50 Black Shark attack helicopter and the follow-on two-seat Ka-52 Alligator was undertaken by the Kamov Design Bureau during the early 1980s, and the Soviet Council of Ministers authorised the early production of the Ka-50 in 1987. The prototype Ka-52 was completed in 1996, featuring the twin-seating arrangement common to transport helicopters. Approximately 85 percent of the components, airframe and systems are common to the Ka-50 and Ka-52. The Ka-52 features a wider nose with radar system incorporated and a longer fuselage than the single-seat version. Initially, four hard points were included, but later models increased that number to six.

The Ka-52 attack helicopter is packed with updated avionics and an array of lethal weapons systems

ENGINE

A pair of Klimov VK-2500 turboshaft engines provide power to the two coaxial contra-rotating main rotors, which eliminate the need for a tail rotor assembly. A derivative of the TV3-117VMA turboshaft engine developed in the mid-1970s, the VK-2500s deliver a maximum speed of 186mph (300kp/h) and cruising speed of 162mph (260kp/h) at a maximum service ceiling of 18,000ft (5,500m). Standard operational range is 286 miles (460km), while ferry range extends to 684 miles (1,110km). In cruise mode, the engines each develop 1,750hp and maintain strong operational capability in conditions of varying air density due to external temperatures in different climatic circumstances.

It's powered by a pair of Klimov VK-2500 turboshaft engines

COCKPIT

The side-by-side cockpit configuration of the Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopter is a departure from standard front-to-back seating, which influences aerodynamics, reduces airspeed slightly, modestly increases fuel consumption while reducing capacity, and limits armour protection for the crew. However, it is intended to facilitate easier functions above the battlefield and coordination with other combat units engaged in the air and on the ground. The cockpit is also configured with survivability in mind as each position is equipped with an ejector seat. When the helicopter is used in the training role, its layout is exceptionally adept for communication between the instructor and the student.

***Above:** The cockpit of the Ka-52 Alligator provides full control of the aircraft for either pilot and adequate visibility*

The side-by-side configuration of the cockpit seats in the Ka-52 is an exception to the usual attack helicopter front-to-back seating

SERVICE HISTORY

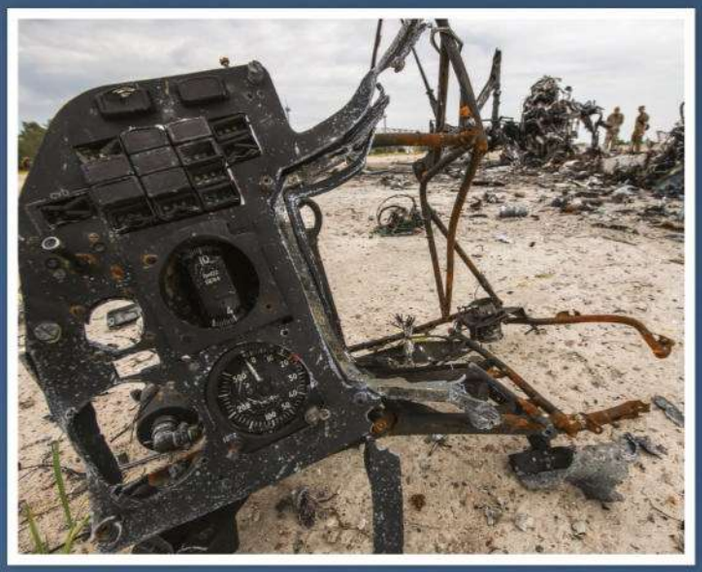
The Ka-52 has been deployed with the Russian armed forces since 2011, and a naval variant, the Ka-52K, was developed for use with the Mistral-class cruiser. In 2015, the Ka-52 was visible in support of Russian forces engaged in the Syrian Civil War. Its primary functions were search and rescue and direct support of special forces personnel. The Ka-52 provided fire-suppression against opposing strongpoints and performed well in the 2017 Palmyra offensive against ISIS terrorist fighters.

During the war in Ukraine, the Ka-52 was heavily involved in the effort to thwart the Ukrainian ground counteroffensive launched in the spring of 2023. The attack helicopter was confronted with state-of-the-art defences supplied by Western and NATO countries, including the US-made Javelin missile and British Martlet surface-to-air missile, as well as the Ukrainian Stugna-P anti-tank guided missile. Western reports indicate that as many as 300 Ka-52 helicopters were lost in combat, and one Ukrainian report claimed that three had been shot down in just 30 minutes on 24 January 2023.

Nevertheless, the Ka-52 is an acknowledged threat to the latest generation of Western tanks now deployed by Ukrainian forces. Its weapons systems are lethal to lightly armoured vehicles and exposed infantry concentrations, while the latest of these allow the helicopter to fire at targets from standoff range, invulnerable to Ukrainian counterfire.

Countermeasures include active electronic jamming equipment, an approach warning sensor and dispensers for flares and chaff

The absence of a tail rotor improves engine power and fuel efficiency



Fragments of a Ka-52 shot down over Hostomel Airport near Kyiv, July 2022

"THE KA-52 IS AN ACKNOWLEDGED THREAT TO THE LATEST GENERATION OF WESTERN TANKS NOW DEPLOYED BY UKRAINIAN FORCES"

Images Alamy, Getty

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MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the National Army Museum's latest displays, the recovery of Hawker Hurricanes near Kyiv and the Dutch Resistance Museum's new exhibition

NAM's Army at Home

Located in the Chelsea district of Central London, the National Army Museum (NAM) shares the history of the United Kingdom's soldiers and their service across the globe down the centuries

One of NAM's latest gallery displays will showcase the breadth of the Army's role at home in Britain, focusing on how it has shaped communities across the entire nation through peacetime and amid its most turbulent periods.

Featuring some never-before-seen objects from the Civil Wars to the present day, the installed gallery – entitled Army at Home – charters the story from its origins to the overall defence of Britain. It likewise highlights the Army's ceremonial traditions, from Trooping the Colour to Buckingham Palace's Changing of the Guard to other royal events.

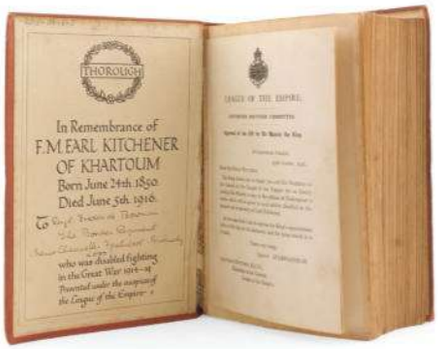
These ceremonies symbolise the continuity of the British monarchy and serve as expressions of national identity, as represented by several of the artefacts displayed. This includes a State Trumpeter's coat worn at the 1911 Delhi Durbar held to commemorate King George V's and Queen Mary's coronation as Emperor and Empress of India.

Additionally, the Army's commitments have long extended to commemoration and remembrance of campaigns abroad. Within the gallery is a fragment of the original Cenotaph unveiled on 19 September 1919 for Peace Day in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Also on display – for the first time – is a George Cross posthumously awarded to Bombardier Henry Herbert Reed for gallantry during the Second World War.

Additionally, a new temporary exhibition entitled Shakespeare at War – created in partnership with King's College London – will explore the ways in which William Shakespeare's most famous plays have influenced how people think about conflict.

War is a frequent theme of Shakespeare's writing and has long been used as a source of reflection. For instance, in the First World War, Shakespeare was claimed by both the British and German forces. Two corresponding objects clearly show the battle for his legacy: a 1916 German cartoon depicting Hamlet standing in a decimated landscape, and 'The Kitchener Shakespeare' – *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (1916) gifted to wounded British soldiers by the League of Empire. Other interpretations of Shakespeare's impact on understanding warfare can be viewed at the exhibition until 14 April 2024.

Both events come at a time when the NAM is in the last stages of a refreshment programme within its exhibition spaces. The project has enabled the museum to display over 50 percent more objects than when the museum reopened after a major refurbishment six years ago.



British and German forces battled over Shakespeare's legacy in the First World War

For more information visit: www.nam.ac.uk

The Army at Home gallery is the last stage of a refreshment programme within the museum's permanent exhibition spaces

Uncovering Ukraine's Hurricane

In Kyiv, hopes are high for a bold restoration project following the discovery of eight Soviet-operated Hawker Hurricanes

Despite Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine, the embattled country's Oleg Antonov State Aviation Museum remains steadfast in carrying out its work. Most recently, through search teams collaborating with the Kyiv-based site, the remains of eight Second World War-era Hawker Hurricanes have been recovered in the hope of a bold restoration project.

American and British aircraft were received by the Soviet Union – of which Ukraine was then a part – via the Lend-Lease programme between 1941 and 1945. Among them were almost 3,000 British Hawker Hurricanes, although many were destroyed in combat or ultimately dismantled for parts. Nevertheless, some were likely broken up and buried so that Soviet authorities, capitalising on a legislative caveat whereby they paid for donated aircraft still intact immediately post-war, could avoid reimbursing the United States.

In June 2023, after operations involving an unexploded bomb, search parties found and later delivered the Hurricane parts, which had been hidden underground in Ukraine, to the museum. It is now expected that the various airframe components can be pieced together for an anticipated collection currently known as Combat Aircraft of WWII.

Serhii Makarov, the museum's deputy director, says: "… [T]his fighter aircraft is considered the classic symbol of British military aid. Eighty-two years later, another symbol of such aid – the British long-range cruise missile Storm Shadow – is used by [the] Ukrainian military for strikes [against] Russian occupation forces."

***Above:** Evidence unearthed by search teams suggests a Soviet attempt to avoid paying for Hawker Hurricanes that were eventually dismantled and hidden underground*

For more information visit: www.aviamuseum.com.ua/en

Dutch courage

Capturing the harsh realities of the Netherlands' WWII, an exhibition on Dutch photographer Cas Oorthuys has been unveiled at the Verzetsmuseum

Located in the heart of Amsterdam, the Verzetsmuseum (Dutch Resistance Museum) has, for almost 40 years, explored the nation's Second World War and the individuals caught in its wake. Now, that experience is being examined through a new, literal lens with the site's latest exhibition on Dutch Resistance photographer Cas Oorthuys (1908-75). During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Oorthuys took hundreds of images that captured the harsh realities of the conflict. Despite the introduction of a widespread photography ban in November 1944, he nevertheless continued to snap shots, joining an illegal group named De Ondergedoken Camera (The Hidden Camera). There, among other subjects, he documented the Dutch Famine – also known as the Hunger Winter.

This exhibition – entitled Cas Oorthuys, verzetsfotograaf (Cas Oorthuys, Resistance Photographer) – displays several of his most harrowing works during the war period. It likewise delves deep into his 1946 travels through Germany, where he photographed devastated cities and the Nuremberg Trials. In 1947, amid the Indonesian National Revolution in what was then the Dutch East Indies, Oorthuys was again present to document history, as shown at the temporary exhibition running until 14 January 2024. Oorthuys' remarkable photos are available to view with the Verzetsmuseum's general admission ticket (€14 for adults, €7.50 for children between 7-17, and free for children under that age).

The Verzetsmuseum's temporary exhibition on Cas Oorthuys is part of the site's broader exploration of dictatorship, war, persecution and, of course, resistance

***Inset, above:** Oorthuys' images captured the suffering of life under Nazi occupation*

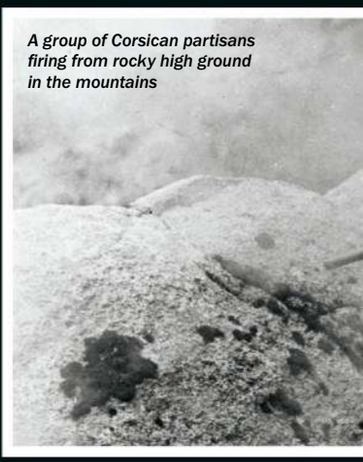
For more information visit: www.verzetsmuseum.org

Images: National Army Museum, Oleg Antonov State Aviation Museum, Alamy

WWII THIS MONTH...

OCTOBER 1943

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict



A group of Corsican partisans firing from rocky high ground in the mountains

LIBERATION OF NAPLES

Though Naples had been briefly mooted for opening Operation Avalanche (part of the Allied invasion of mainland Italy), planners had decided against an amphibious landing at the Italian port. Avalanche had instead been carried out around Salerno to the south of Naples. Nevertheless, by 1 October 1943, the Allies had captured the latter city. Their arrival was preceded by fierce Italian resistance movements culminating in what became known as the 'Four Days in Naples'. Between 27 and 30 September, Neapolitan men, women and even children had launched an uprising against the German occupiers. As a result, when Allied forces drove into Naples, they found that the locals had largely, in a sense, liberated themselves – albeit at the considerable cost of Italian lives and widespread destruction.

Grateful citizens of Naples greet their liberators on the streets, although residents had largely freed themselves from Nazi occupation

Images © Alamy, Getty

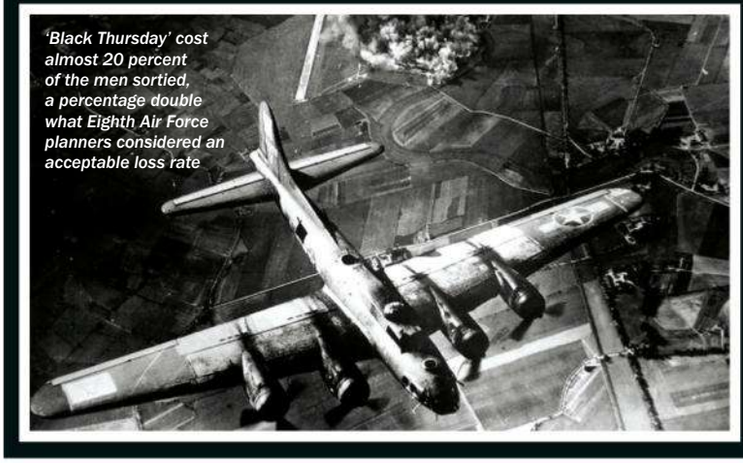
GERMAN FORCES EXPELLED FROM CORSICA

The Mediterranean island of Corsica – birthplace of Napoleon – had initially been under Vichy French control from 1940 until the Italian occupation in November 1942. These Axis forces were joined by a German contingent in 1943, although the seeds for organised resistance had already been planted among the local population. In light of Italy's armistice with the Allies in September 1943, the Italian commander in Corsica, Giovanni Magli, sided with the Corsican partisans in their fight to seize the island. The ensuing battle saw Maquis groups utilise the mountains to hamper enemy movements and launch an insurrection in Ajaccio, Corsica's capital. Later bolstered by Free French troops, the combined Allied-aligned takeover succeeded in expelling the Germans by 4 October 1943.

"THE SEEDS FOR ORGANISED RESISTANCE HAD ALREADY BEEN PLANTED"

US EIGHTH AIR FORCE'S 'BLACK THURSDAY'

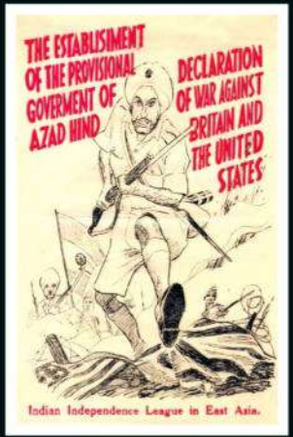
In August 1943, the United States Army Air Forces had attacked German ball-bearing factories in Schweinfurt, Germany. Despite reportedly reducing enemy production by about 40 per cent, it had likewise cost 20 percent of the aircraft involved. A second raid was launched on 14 October 1943, comprising 291 US Eighth Air Force bombers. Escorted by fighters only part of the way, the Luftwaffe intercepted once the P-47s had departed. German aircraft preyed on the formation, followed by flak fire above Schweinfurt itself. By the time the Americans returned home, they had lost 60 B-17s, another 17 were no longer airworthy, and 121 had been at least minorly damaged. Around 600 aircrew had also been killed, wounded or reported missing in action in what became known as 'Black Thursday'.



'Black Thursday' cost almost 20 percent of the men sortied, a percentage double what Eighth Air Force planners considered an acceptable loss rate

AXIS-ALIGNED INDIAN GOVERNMENT FORMED

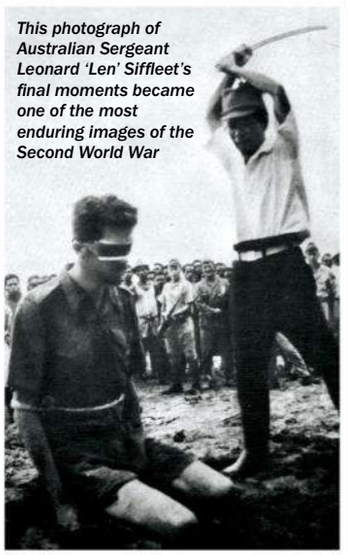
The Provisional Government of Free India (or Azad Hind) was established on 21 October 1943 to obtain independence from Britain. Formed in Japanese-occupied Singapore, Azad Hind – under nationalist leader Subhas Chandra Bose – developed its own currency, court system and military force known as the Indian National Army (INA), which fought against the Allies. Bose had previously worked with Nazi Germany in his determination to achieve Indian independence and now steered his leadership into the political fold of Imperial Japan. Azad Hind effectively ceased to exist after Bose died in a plane crash in August 1945. The circumstances of his death have since been disputed in some circles, though predominantly among his most avid supporters past and present.


THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERMENT OF AZAD HIND
DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES
Indian Independence League in East Asia.

***Above:** A piece of propaganda material produced by the India Independence League*

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO BEHEADED ON CAMERA

In Dutch New Guinea just after 3pm on 24 October 1943, 27-year-old Australian commando Leonard Siffleet was beheaded on camera. The photograph became one of the most enduring images of the Second World War, highlighting the brutality inflicted upon Allied prisoners by the Japanese. Born in New South Wales, Siffleet had volunteered for special duties in 1942 before being sent on a mission into Japanese-occupied New Guinea. His group was ultimately confronted by local Indigenous people, who then handed them over to enemy forces. Beaten, interrogated and imprisoned for two weeks – during which time Siffleet apparently revealed little – he and two fellow prisoners were executed in public. The photograph of Siffleet's final moments was found by American troops in 1944.



This photograph of Australian Sergeant Leonard 'Len' Siffleet's final moments became one of the most enduring images of the Second World War

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books

AFTER THE NAZIS

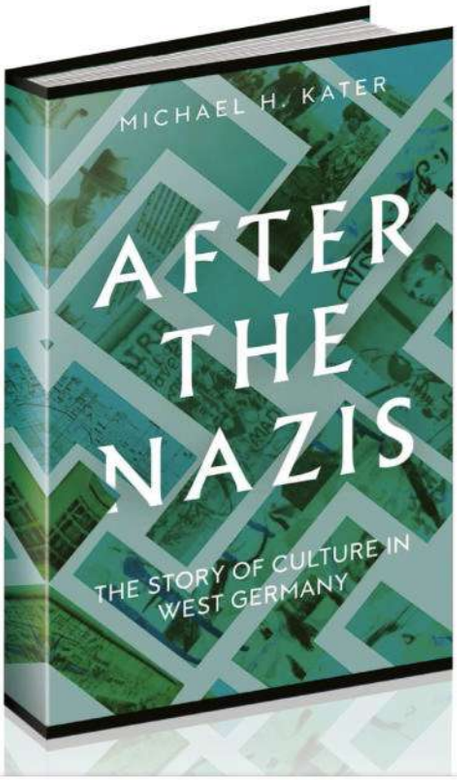
HOW WEST GERMANY REBUILT ITSELF CULTURALLY FOLLOWING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Author: Michael H Kater **Publisher:** Yale University Press **Price:** £25 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

This is the concluding book in a series from Michael H Kater on German culture following *Weimar: From Enlightenment to the Present* (2014) and *Culture in Nazi Germany* (2019). Having tracked cultural movements and influences from one of Germany's most influential cities to the upheaval of Nazism, he now looks at the post-war era and it's possibly the most fascinating of them all.

Kater paints a picture of a nation stripped of cultural touchstones it could rely on. The Nazis had destroyed and sidelined art that it considered unworthy (at best) and degenerate (at worst). Now, in the post-war era, anything connected to the Nazis was also taboo. With so much lost under the Third Reich and now a whole generation of art considered tainted by Hitler's regime, a cultural chasm was waiting to be filled. It's a dark and daunting image in many respects, but also one full of possibilities, which you can feel in Kater's own descriptions of it.

The new creative voices of West Germany, as the democratic half of the nation was now known, were embracing rebellion, internationalism and anti-establishment thinking. There was experimentation and the expression of individualistic voices, not the grand social hegemony that had been expected of the 1930s and 40s.



However, these new creative endeavours were not without some shadow of Nazism still hanging over them and, again, Kater takes us down this thread. How did the spectre of totalitarian rule, the war and the horrors of concentration camps weigh on the national consciousness, if at all? How deep had the tendrils of National Socialism dug into people's skin? What place would German Jews have in this new nation? *After The Nazis* opens with a chapter about exactly those issues as well as life under Allied occupation and the efforts to rebuild West Germany into a democratic state.

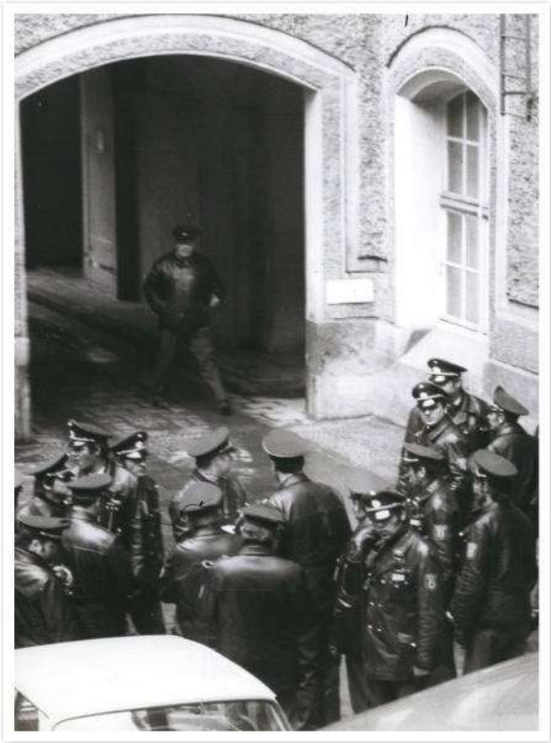
There's also an important connection drawn between cultural freedom and democratic ideals. The Third Reich controlled culture and the arts as a means of social control. People were not free to think or act as they wished and artistic restrictions both reflected and

***Below, left:** Residents of Dusseldorf in West Germany demonstrate against post-war privations, 1947*

***Below, middle:** Norwegian soldiers stationed in Northeim (in the British Zone) look into a shop window*

***Below, right:** An American checkpoint in Berlin, 1947. The city's cultural life was slowly emerging from the long shadow of Nazism*

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov



***Above:** Security personnel outside the 1971 trial relating to the Red Army Faction, a West German radical leftist group*

enforced this view. In West Germany, a new spirit of democracy needed to be engendered and freedom of expression was integral to this. And all in a nation that was essentially bankrupt and rebuilding its economy piece by piece. Kater lays out the very gradual process very well, not least because he grew up living it.

From the outset, Kater reflects on his own personal connections and experiences to draw readers into these stories, remembering episodes from his own time growing up in Germany or the distant relations of the past who had their roles to play in daily German life. This personalisation is a welcome respite given that much of the book can feel very academic and heavy in its language and references, but it is also a means to humanise the history and information being shared, making it all that little bit easier to engage with and digest. **JG**

A FAITHFUL SPY

WALTER BELL'S CAREER AS A SPOOK BEGAN IN THE 1930s AND SAW HIM PLAY A KEY ROLE IN WWII AND ITS TURBULENT AFTERMATH

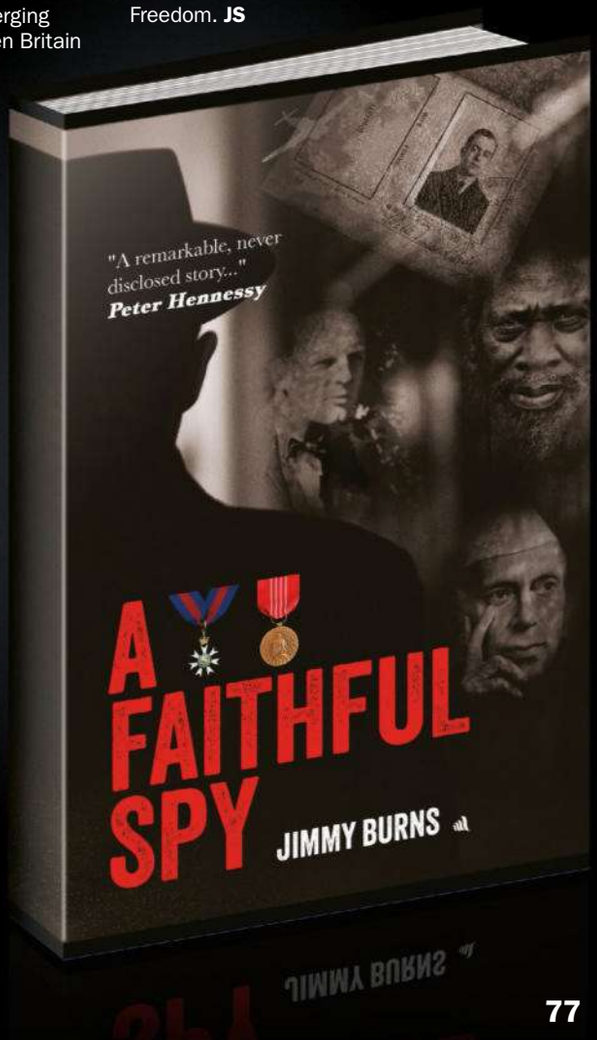
Author: Jimmy Burns **Publisher:** Chiselbury
Price: £22 (Hardback) **Released:** October 2023

We meet the protagonist of this true-to-life spy thriller in a suitably shadowy location. It is a late autumn afternoon in 1934 and Walter Bell, "a tall young man with a slight stoop", is making his way along a cold and seemingly deserted road near Westminster in London. It was here that Bell was recruited into the service of MI6 to begin his career as an Intelligence agent. Conscious of the threat of Nazism, and wanting to do something about it, he was ready for an approach from British Intelligence services.

In his narrative, author Jimmy Burns unravels the life of the spy with whom he was personally acquainted and who became a key player in the emerging Intelligence relationship between Britain and America before, during and immediately after the Second World War. Bell's first-hand experience of Germany and Austria during the 1930s forged his views on Europe and made working for British Intelligence an attractive career proposition. He harboured no doubts that northern Europe's turbulent ideological battles were a prologue to another war.

Bell's career was to lead him into the shadowlands of espionage during the war, before he served at the UK Embassy in Washington during a critical period in the post-war Anglo-American relationship. He joined MI5 in 1949 and worked as an advisor to various Commonwealth governments and as personal assistant to Roger Hollis, the spy agency's chief.

Bell was joined at the waist with the special relationship between Britain and the US. His loyalty to this cause was rewarded with a CMG from Britain and the US Medal of Freedom. **JS**



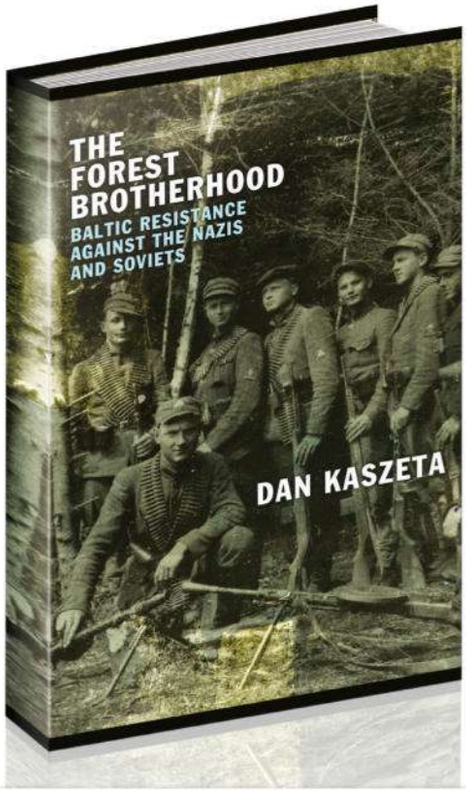
THE FOREST BROTHERHOOD

THE UNTOLD TALE OF HEROIC BATTLES FOR FREEDOM FROM SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE BALTIC STATES, DURING AND AFTER WWII

Author: Dan Kaszeta
Publisher: Hurst
Price: £25 (Hardback)
Released: Out now

Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allies in May 1945, putting an end to six years of bloody global conflict. That is the commonly held view of the outcome of the Second World War. But it was a different scenario for Baltic partisans of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, for whom it was war as usual for roughly another decade. Their enemy was Soviet Russia, whose occupation of these countries sparked a partisan movement as controversial as it was determined to throw off the yoke of Soviet imperialism.

For the Russians, the resistance movement known as the Forest Brotherhood was nothing more than a band of lawless criminals, not an unsurprising accusation given that Moscow's aim was to eradicate the very idea of Baltic nationhood. The Soviets vehemently condemned the Forest Brotherhood as Nazis, conveniently overlooking the fact, as author Dan Kaszeta points out, that when the Baltic states fell under Soviet occupation in 1940, the USSR was allied with Nazi Germany.



The Forest Brotherhood groups were not alone in their campaign against the might of the USSR. Their war became a small part of the Cold War between East and West. Western Intelligence services believed the fighters could serve as a warning of Soviet troop movements on Western Europe's borders with the Eastern bloc. British liaison with these Baltic resistance groups eventually evolved into a full-blown Intelligence operation, called Operation Jungle, which was largely a naval espionage undertaking.

Kaszeta says the Forest Brotherhood movement constituted an important part of the Baltic countries' survival: "As long as the Forest Brothers were still alive, even only in memory, the idea of independent Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remained alive, too." **JS**

"BRITISH LIAISON WITH THESE BALTIC RESISTANCE GROUPS EVENTUALLY EVOLVED INTO A FULL-BLOWN INTELLIGENCE OPERATION"

Lithuanian partisans fought against Soviet rule after WWII

***Below:** Partisan fighters such as these men proved useful allies in the emerging Cold War*

Images: Alamy, Getty, Wiki / PD / Gov

A US Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle over Helmand province, November 2008

AFGHAN AIR WARS

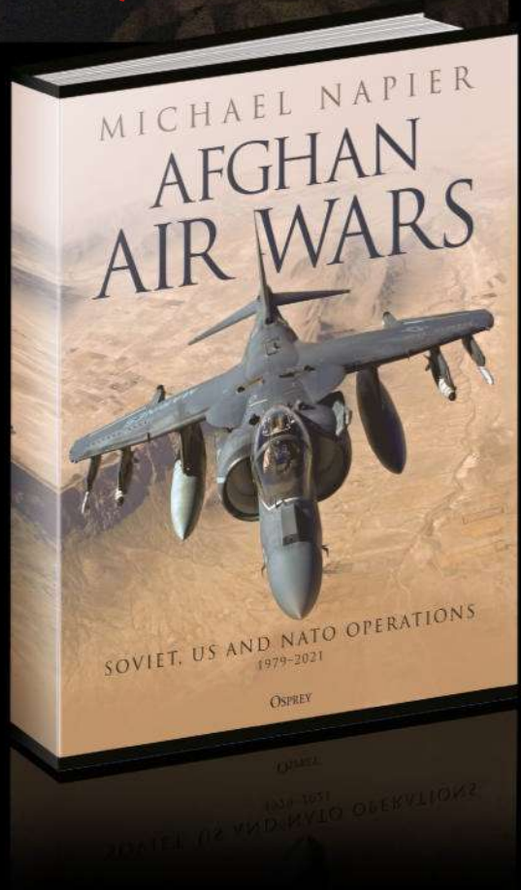
SOVIET, US AND NATO OPERATIONS, 1979-2012

A DETAILED INSIGHT INTO HOW AIRPOWER HAS BEEN DEPLOYED IN THIS WARTORN COUNTRY THROUGHOUT MANY CONFLICTS, AND HOW THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT SHAPED ITS USE

Authors: Michael Napier **Publisher:** Osprey
Price: £30 (Hardback) **Released:** Out now

For a century, foreign powers have been involved in air wars over Afghanistan. After the First World War, the Royal Air Force joined the 'Great Game' on the North West Frontier, engaging in the Third Afghan War and then launching the world's first aerial evacuation, from Kabul in 1928-29. The Soviets invaded in 1979 and spent ten fruitless years attempting to stamp their authority on this desolate country. After the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the United States, supported by a broad coalition, entered the country to eliminate Al Qaeda and the Taliban who harboured them. In each case, they brought the most modern of weaponry and technology to this challenging and hostile environment, and in each case they still struggled to gain the initiative, let alone obtain victory.

This is a lavish publication, as to be expected from Osprey, and is exceptionally well illustrated, but it is no mere picture book. After giving an overview of military aviation in Afghanistan up to 1979, Napier goes into deeper detail on Soviet operations, covering the doctrine, equipment and operations of their air components, liberally support by eye-witness accounts from the aircrew involved. Similar chapters follow on the much longer US and NATO air campaigns, broken down to reflect the different phases of the 20-year operation. Common themes arise: the need for aerial reconnaissance, close air support and air mobility in such a landscape, and the development of technological solutions to problems faced. Napier writes engagingly, and this is a must for anyone interested in modern air power. **SH**



DISCOVER THE STORY OF THE BRUTAL BATTLE FOR NAZI GERMANY'S CAPITAL

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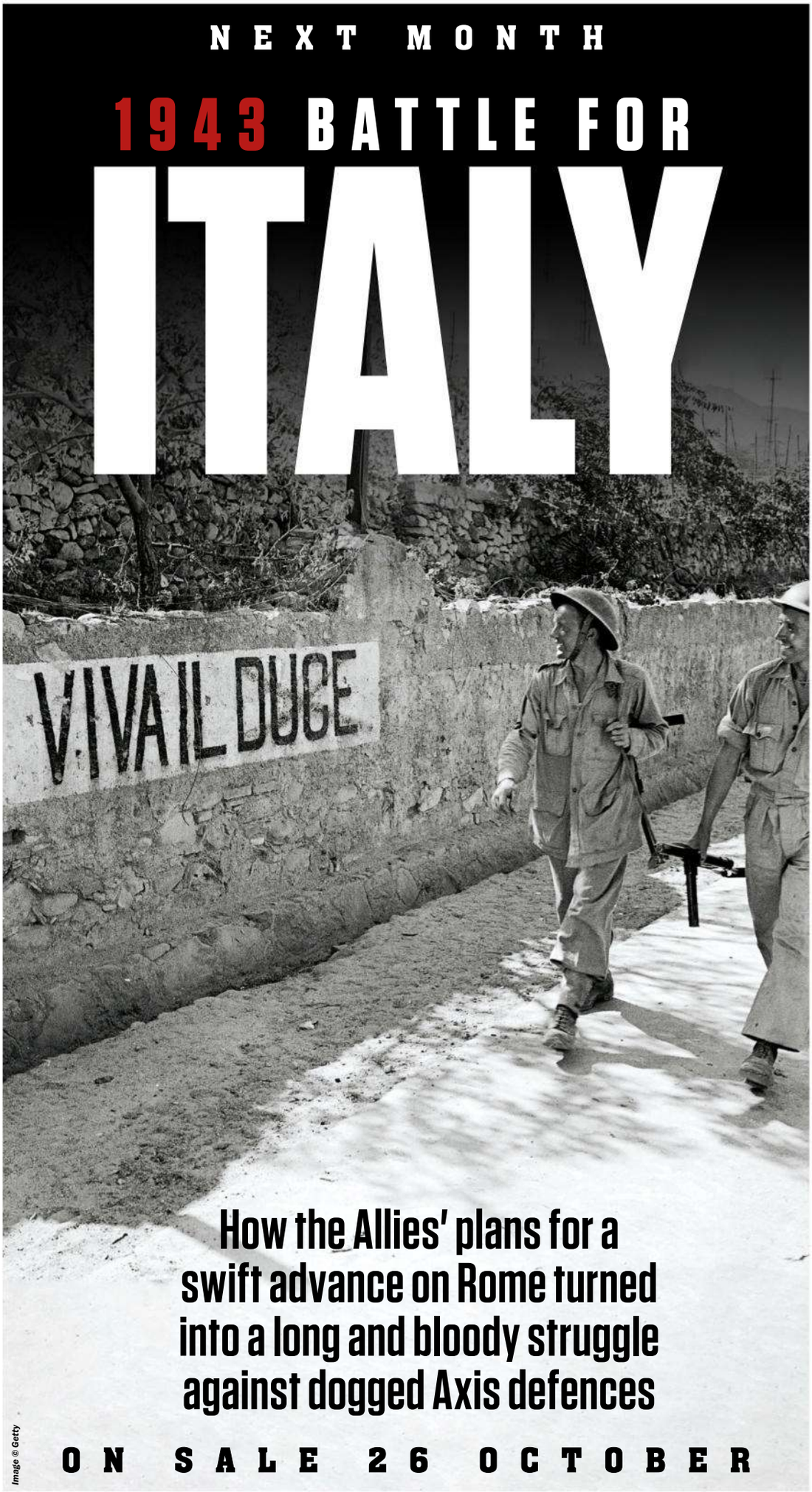
NEXT MONTH
1943 BATTLE FOR
ITALY
VIVA IL DUCE
How the Allies' plans for a swift advance on Rome turned into a long and bloody struggle against dogged Axis defences
ON SALE 26 OCTOBER
Image © Getty

HISTORY of WAR

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk For enquiries please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

ISSN 2054-376X

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History of War (ISSN 2054-376X USPS 23835) is published monthly with an extra issue in October by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK. The US annual subscription price is $171.60. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc. 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn NY 11256 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to History of War, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, c/o Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. UK

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AMERICAN REVOLUTION POWDER HORN

Once owned by a Black soldier of the Revolutionary War, this powder horn highlights the incredible contributions of African Americans in forging the United States

On 3 July 1778, a combined force of Iroquois and Loyalists descended upon the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania. There, the British-backed raiders met an outnumbered contingent of American troops, decimating their numbers in a battle since dubbed – somewhat contentiously – the Wyoming Massacre. Among the fallen was Gershom Prince, a Black soldier fighting with the Patriots who had once called the valley his home. From his body, an elaborately decorated powder horn he had long carried was taken and preserved.

"Very few powder horns of Black Revolutionary War soldiers survive," says Dr Philip Mead, chief historian and director of curatorial affairs at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, where the centuries-old artefact was recently on loan. "This one is probably the only surviving powder horn of a Black soldier who was killed in action."

Now cared for by the Luzerne County Historical Society, Pennsylvania, the gunpowder holder fashioned from a cow horn has Prince's name carved into it. Surrounding this are intricate images of trees, forts and scenes from everyday life, offering a unique insight into the Connecticut-born soldier's experiences. Prince used the gunpowder horn in two conflicts – the French and Indian War (1754-63) and the Revolutionary War (1775-83). Serving in the latter, Prince was a (likely free) aide to Captain Durkee of the 4th Connecticut Regiment.

After surviving the Battles of Brandywine (11 September 1777) and Germantown (4 October 1777), as well as the winter encampment at Valley Forge, the Battle of Wyoming would be Prince's last. Upon the engagement's centennial year, in 1878, a monument was erected in recognition of those who had lost their lives and were buried on the site. The fallen African American Patriot was listed last under the "Privates" heading as "Gershom Prince, colored".

Historian and author Denise Dennis, a descendant of Prince's family, said of the soldier's legacy: "Knowing stories like those of Gershom Prince and other African American Revolutionary War patriots benefits all Americans by reminding us of our shared heritage. Their stories tell Americans that even during a time when most Black people were held in slavery, there were African American sons of liberty who fought for the nation's independence as well as for their own freedom and that of their enslaved brethren."

Images: The Luzerne County Historical Society and the Museum of the American Revolution

***Above:** Gershom Prince was carrying this gunpowder horn when he was killed in the Battle of Wyoming in 1778*

***Left:** Historian and author Denise Dennis, a descendent of Prince's family, examines the powder horn*

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Prince's powder horn is part of the Luzerne County Historical Society collection in Pennsylvania. Dating back to 1858, the institution has long pursued its mission of highlighting local history through exhibits, events, lectures and tours.

www.amrevmuseum.org

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We promise never to sell or swap your details, and will always keep them secure. You can view our Privacy Notice in full at www.centrepoint.org.uk/privacy. You can opt out of post and change how we communicate with you at any time. Please call 0800 232320 and speak to one of our friendly team or email supportercare@centrepoint.org to do this and ask us any questions.

Please return this form to: Freepost Plus RTXY-LBEA-UTJJ, Angel Fulfilment Services Ltd, Communication Centre, Par Moor Road, Par PL24 2SQ.

Registered office address: Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ. Company no. 1929421. Registered Charity no. 292411. Housing association no. H1869. VAT registration no. 649 345 018.

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